



SEPTEMBER 2025

**DRAFT  
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN**

Vision

ONE  
great  
REGION

**ARC**  
Atlanta Regional Commission  
229 Peachtree Street, NE  
Suite 100  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303  
[atlantaregional.org](http://atlantaregional.org)

Mission

Foster thriving communities for all within the Atlanta region through collaborative, data-informed planning and investments

Goals



**Healthy, safe, livable communities** in the Atlanta Metro area



**Strategic investments** in people, infrastructure, mobility, and preserving natural resources



Regional services delivered with **operational excellence** and **efficiency**.



**Diverse stakeholders engage** and take a regional approach to solve local issues.



**A competitive economy** that is inclusive, innovative, and resilient.

Values

**Excellence** - A commitment to doing our best and going above and beyond in every facet of our work allowing for innovative practices and actions to be created while ensuring our agency's and our colleague's success.

**Integrity** - In our conduct, communication, and collaboration with each other and the region's residents, we will act with consistency, honesty, transparency, fairness and accountability within and across each of our responsibilities and functions.

**Equity** - We represent a belief that there are some things which people should have, that there are basic needs that should be fulfilled, that burdens and rewards should not be spread too divergently across the community, and that policy should be directed with impartiality, fairness and justice towards these ends.



Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination by federal-aid recipients on the basis of race, color, and national origin. Other federal and state authorities provide protection from discrimination based upon sex, age, disability, income, and family status. As a federal funding recipient, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) takes its civil rights responsibilities seriously and will not exclude from participation in, deny benefits of, or subject anyone to discrimination under any program or activity based on membership in any of the above classifications. Moreover, ARC regularly reviews its policies, plans, and programs to ensure they are free from discrimination.

If any person believes they have been discriminated against regarding the receipt of benefits or services because of race, color, or national origin, they have the right to file a complaint with ARC. More information is available on our website at [atlantaregional.org/titlevi](http://atlantaregional.org/titlevi) or by contacting the Title VI Officer listed on the Title VI Plan and Program page. Individuals with a hearing impairment may also contact ARC at **800.255.0056**. The contents of this plan reflect the views of the persons preparing the document and those individuals are responsible for the facts and the accuracy of the data presented herein.

The contents of this report do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), and other transportation planning, implementation, and/or service delivery agencies. This report does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation.



# Draft Public Participation Plan

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Figures and Tables	4
Plan Approvals	5
Introduction	7
Legal Background	8
ARC’s Community Engagement Strategy	11
Public Participation Policies and Procedures	41
MPO Consultation Process	44
Participation Plan Evaluation	57
Appendices	
A. Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Summary	
B. Public Comment and Response Report	
C. Code of Federal Regulations Governing Public Involvement in Transportation Planning	
D. ARC Bylaws	

# Figures and Tables

## FIGURES

Figure 1 — ARC MPO Boundaries	8
Figure 2 — Preferred Tactics Process	12
Figure 3 — UPWP Revision Procedures	44
Figure 4 — MTP and TIP Development Procedures	47
Figure 5 — MTP and TIP Revisions: Administrative Modifications and Amendments Procedures	50
Figure 6 — Public Participation Plan Revision Procedures	53

## TABLES

Table 1 — ARC Preferred Public Participation Tactics	13
Table 2 — Recommended Project Timing for Preferred Tactics	14
Table 3 — ARC Public Participation Goals and Objectives	36
Table 4 — UPWP Development Timeline	45
Table 5 — ARC Public Participation Outputs	57
Table 6 — ARC Public Participation Outcomes	58





# Plan Approvals

## Public Review and Comment Process

This section will be updated after the Public Review and Comment Process is complete.

## ARC Adoption Resolution

This resolution will be added once the PPP is adopted.

## Amendment History

This section will be updated as the plan is amended.





## Introduction

This Public Participation Plan (PPP) is a foundational document for the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC). It outlines ARC's policies and procedures for public participation in the transportation planning process, and it details ARC's community engagement ethos, including preferred tactics for public involvement in the agency's work.

As one of ARC's four core Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) deliverables, this PPP supersedes and updates ARC's 2019 Community Engagement Plan. The purpose of the PPP Update is threefold:

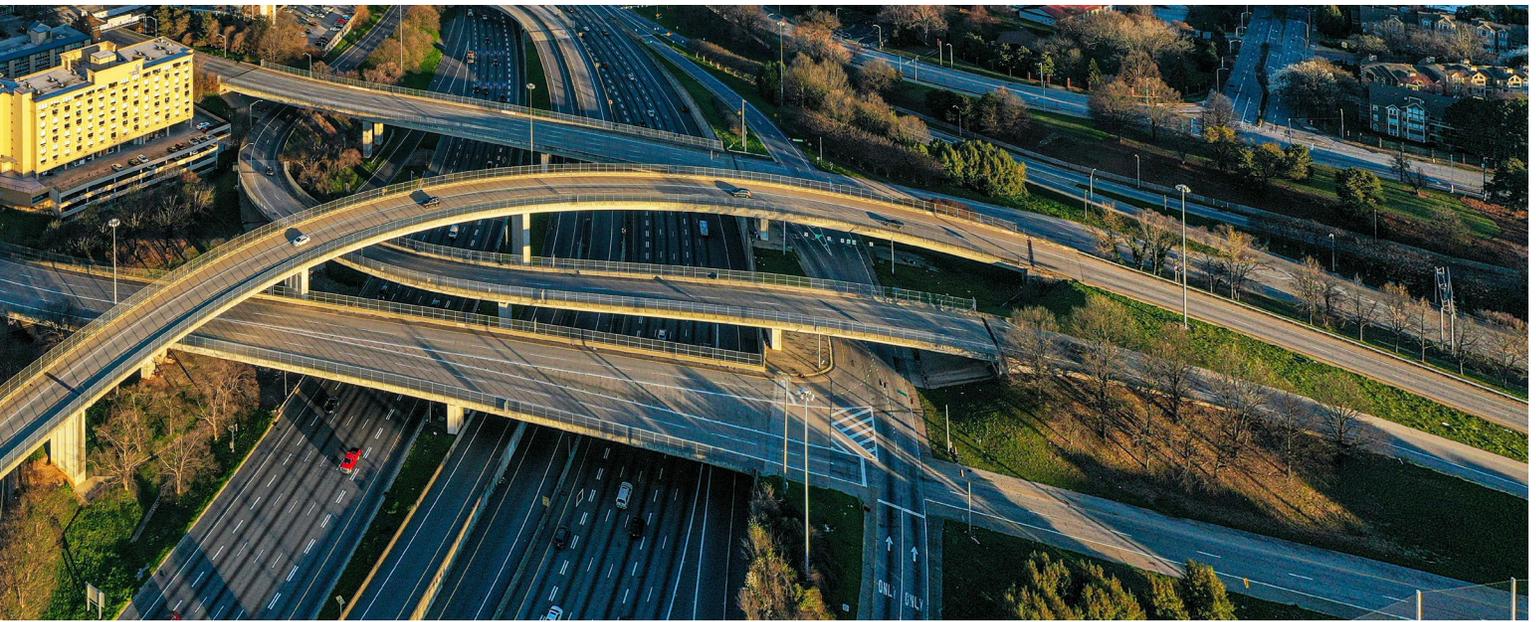
- First, it updates ARC's strategy for public participation to ensure it reflects current trends and preferences in communication and community engagement. Advances in electronic communication tools, computer and mobile device technology, and access to internet services, as well as lifestyle changes, have led to new expectations and techniques for public participation.
- Second, ARC's procedures for stakeholder engagement have changed since the 2019 adoption of the community engagement plan. The PPP updates procedural activities

for MPO core deliverables.

- Third, the PPP offers a set of preferred tactics and metrics designed to assist with strengthening and improving public participation efforts around the Atlanta region.

The PPP was supported by robust stakeholder engagement that resulted in useful agency and public input into the plan. This engagement included stakeholder focus groups, a survey, and attendance at numerous community events. The Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Summary ([Appendix A](#)) offers a broader view of the PPP development process. It also explains how feedback was used to inform plan strategies and procedures.

A final cornerstone of public participation in PPP development is the public comment period. The public has been invited to review and comment on the draft PPP during an official 45-day public comment period (September 3 - October 18, 2025). A Public Comment and Response Report ([Appendix B](#)) documents this effort. (*Appendix B will be added after the conclusion of the public comment period.*)



# Legal Background

## Atlanta Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

As the MPO, ARC is responsible for implementing a wide range of federal transportation planning requirements in the 19-county Atlanta region (Figure 1). Participation from the public and partner agencies is expected and welcomed in all aspects of ARC’s transportation planning, service delivery, and implementation activities. This participation can take a variety of forms, depending on the nature of the activity being undertaken. In all instances, ARC meets its MPO participation and engagement responsibilities in a way that adheres to relevant laws, rules, and regulations. This section outlines the relevant requirements.

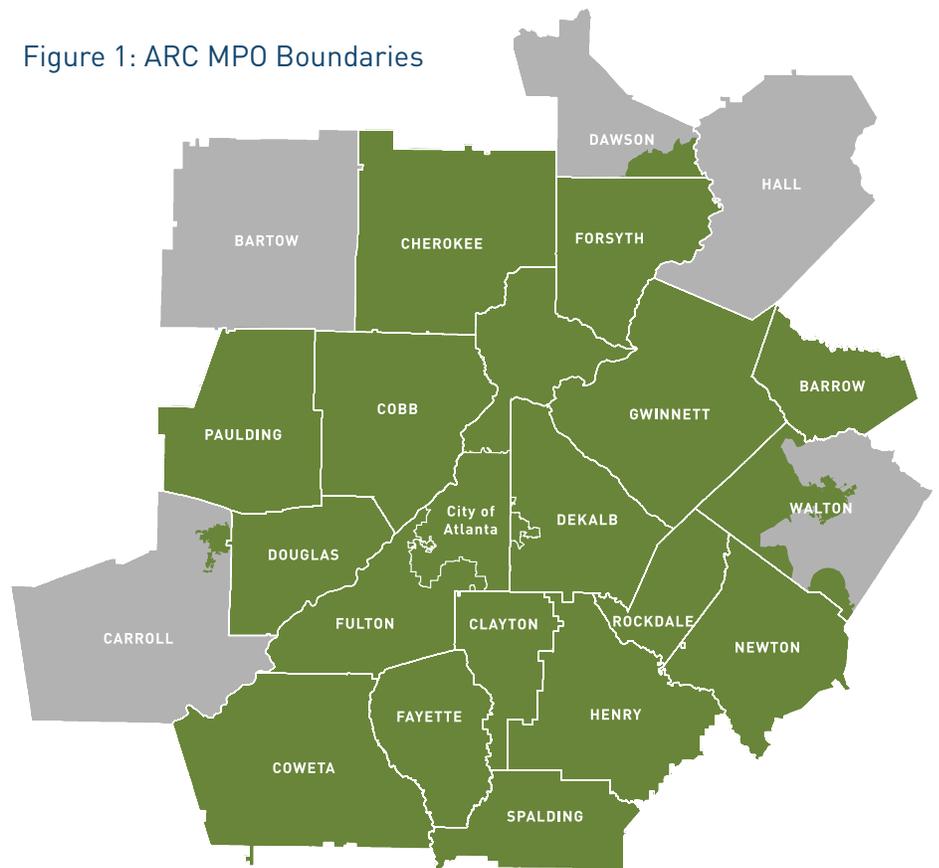
## Federal Transportation Laws, Rules, and Regulations

There are several federal laws, rules, and regulations that govern metropolitan transportation planning and public participation.

The overarching law is the Transportation Authorization Act, a statutory provision that establishes or continues a Federal

agency, activity, or program, such as the Federal-aid Highway Program (FAHP) for a fixed or indefinite period of time. The FAHP authorization sets funding and requirements for transportation

Figure 1: ARC MPO Boundaries



planning and programming. It also may set forth the duties and functions of an agency or program, its organizational structure, and the responsibilities of agency or program officials. This includes regulatory details that guide MPO planning and public involvement, as well as information about the parameters of various funding programs. Most authorization acts are multi-year acts that contain provisions for not only the FAHP, but for other surface transportation modes, such as transit.

ARC, as the MPO, receives federal formula funds that are apportioned to the state and sub-allocated to ARC by a formula that considers the urbanized area population of the MPO, planning needs, and a minimum distribution. In addition to formula funds, ARC, local governments within the MPO, and other entities can receive non-formula funds in the form of competitive grants from USDOT or congressionally-directed spending.

The first authorizing legislation establishing the FAHP was passed by Congress nearly 100 years ago. While not every act revises regulatory provisions for MPO planning or public involvement, there are often shifts in policy emphasis with new legislation.

### Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)

On November 15, 2021, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) became law. The IIJA provides \$550 billion over fiscal years 2022 through 2026 for infrastructure, including roads, bridges, mass transit, water infrastructure, resilience, and broadband. In addition, it broadens the authorizing legislation to include more competitive funding programs and direct opportunities for local governments to apply for competitive grants. In tandem with this authorizing legislation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has issued numerous fact sheets and materials related to IIJA; however, there have not yet been any regulatory changes related to MPO planning and public involvement regulations.

### MPO Planning and Public Involvement Regulations

Federal regulations governing public involvement for MPOs are included in 23 CFR 450.316 (Appendix C), which was last amended in 2011. These regulations state that a MPO is required to engage in a metropolitan planning process that creates opportunities for public involvement, participation, and consultation throughout the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). To meet this requirement, MPOs must allow for:

1. Adequate public notice of public participation activities;
2. Review and comment at key decision points in the development of the MTP and TIP; and
3. Multiple participation formats, including electronic and in-person.
4. Periodic review of participation strategies and their effectiveness to maintain a full and open participation process.

The MPO should also complete a collaborative and comprehensive Public Participation Plan, in full collaboration with the public and stakeholder communities, to be used in the development of the MTP and TIP, as well as to frame the strategies for public and stakeholder involvement in all phases of the planning process. The MPO Public Participation Plan itself must have a 45-day public review and comment period.

## Other Relevant Federal Legislation and Guidance

### Title VI of the Civil Rights Act

Civil rights requirements are directly related to the practice of providing meaningful participation in the transportation planning process.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. Public agencies must enforce the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and take affirmative steps to ensure the protection of rights and opportunities for all persons affected by its programs, services, and activities.

### Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed by Congress in 1990. It was amended by Congress in 2008. This law prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in everyday activities. The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability just as other civil rights laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion.



The ADA guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to enjoy employment opportunities, purchase goods and services, and participate in state and local government programs.

FHWA's regulatory responsibilities under Title II of the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 include oversight of state and local entities and recipients of federal funds that are responsible for roadways and pedestrian facilities to ensure that they do not discriminate on the basis of disability in any highway transportation program, activity, service, or benefit they provide to the public.

### **Executive Order 14151 - Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing**

Executive Order 14151, titled "Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing," was signed by President Trump on January 20, 2025.

A key directive of the order is the mandated termination of all diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility programs, mandates, policies, and activities within federal agencies. This mandate includes the rescission of Executive Order 12898 "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations". Executive Order 12898 included direction to incorporate environmental justice provisions into public participation activities.

### **Executive Order 14224 - Designating English as the Official Language of U.S.**

Executive Order 14224, titled "Designating English as the Official Language of the U.S.," was signed by President Trump on March 1, 2025.

This executive order revokes Executive Order 13166 "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency", which was important for public participation in transportation. It designates English as the official language of the United States. While not explicitly banning multilingual services, it gives agencies flexibility in deciding when and how to offer interpretation and translation services, effectively rescinding the previous mandate requiring language assistance.

## **State Law**

### **Georgia Open Meetings Act**

The Georgia Open Meetings Act of 2012 requires that government meetings be open to the public. The law also requires governmental bodies to provide reasonable notice of all meetings and to make summary notes of public meetings available for public review. Specifically, when there is a gathering of a quorum of any governing body:

- The meeting needs to be open to the public;
- Information about the time, place, and dates of regular meetings shall be posted at least one week in advance of the meeting and posted in a conspicuous place;
- An agenda of all matters expected to come before the agency or committee at such a meeting shall be made available as far in advance of the meeting as reasonably possible, sometime within the two-week period immediately prior to the meeting; and
- A summary of the subjects acted on and members present at a meeting shall be written and made available to the public for inspection within two business days of the adjournment of a meeting.



# Community Engagement Strategy (CES)

Meaningful Community Engagement	12
Preferred Public Participation Tactics	12
Goals and Objectives	35
Tools for Implementation	36

## Meaningful Community Engagement

ARC’s Community Engagement Strategy guides decisions about how best to meet and exceed the intent of laws, rules, and regulations governing public involvement. This strategy is designed for use by local planning partners as well as ARC staff and consultants. The strategy is built around a strong commitment to meaningful community engagement. Throughout the Community Engagement Strategy detailed here, meaningful community engagement refers to engagement that is 1) **applicable** to the transportation planning process through relevant, thoughtful questions and facilitation; 2) **representative** of the communities impacted by the transportation planning process; and 3) **accountable** to legal regulations and the public through accurate documentation that clearly demonstrates how feedback was gathered and integrated into final policies, programs, plans, and projects. These three cornerstones of meaningful engagement support ARC to exceed regulatory standards and provide genuine opportunities for metro-Atlanta communities to influence transportation decisions that affect their daily lives.

## Preferred Public Participation Tactics

To support this kind of meaningful engagement, ARC developed a set of preferred tactics that serve as the core of the Community Engagement Strategy. These tactics are grounded in federal guidance for effective engagement practices across different community contexts and a variety of transportation project, plan, and program types. ARC reviewed this guidance and considered it in the context of regional expertise, feedback

received from community engagement and public surveys, and industry best practices to identify the tools and techniques that were most applicable to its regional work. Once this refined list was complete, ARC used the Spectrum of Public Participation published by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) as a framework to organize its preferred list according to different levels of participation.

The IAP2 spectrum uses five levels of participation – Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, and Empower – which set expectations about the public’s potential impact on a given project. The spectrum, as used in this strategic way, functions as an à la carte menu to identify appropriate strategies based on time, funding, staff capacity, study area, and other factors dictated by a transportation project’s overall scope. The goal is to employ participation tactics at the highest rung possible within a project’s set limitations. This project-specific structure makes the IAP2 spectrum a useful guide for gathering meaningful engagement while navigating practical constraints on a range of transportation planning initiatives.

ARC’s preferred public participation tactics are presented in Table 1 for transparency in ARC’s processes and as a resource for other agencies engaged in regional transportation planning. The Tools row of the table includes examples of action-oriented tools that can support these preferred tactics. Tools marked with an \* are more innovative approaches with documented, promising results that ARC would like to explore further in future engagement efforts. The Tools for Implementation section of this Community Engagement Strategy includes more details on the tools listed in Table 1.

To support strategy implementation, this section provides one-page guides on each tactic listed in Table 1. These guides include three elements: 1) a brief definition of each tactic and its intended audiences, 2) suggestions on how the

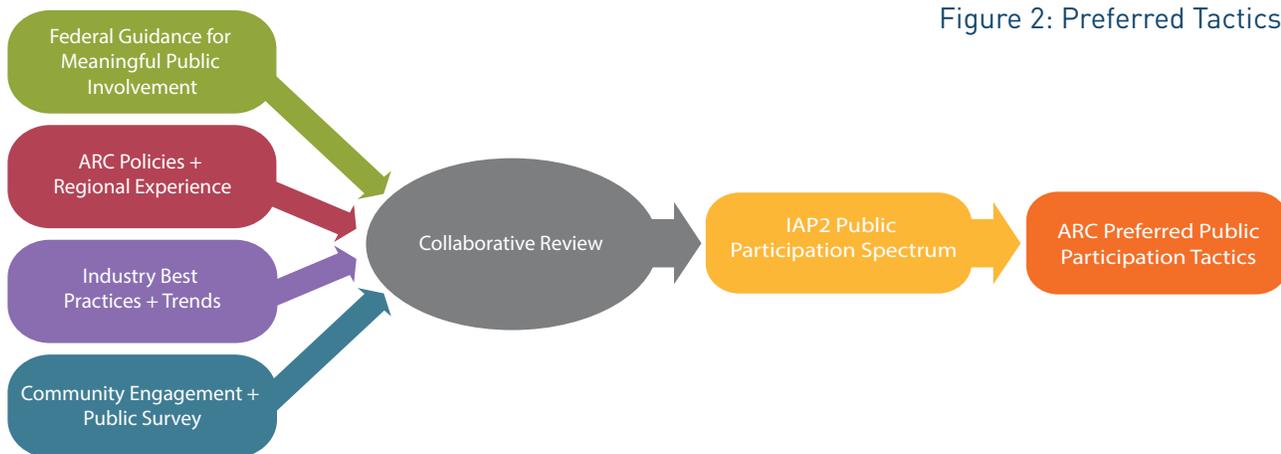


Figure 2: Preferred Tactics Process

Table 1: ARC Preferred Public Participation Tactics

					
ARC Public Participation Tactics	Project Website Blog Post Social Media Campaign E-Newsletters Press Releases Community Presentations	Surveys & Polling Community Events Open Houses Public Comment Periods Public Hearings Agency Consultation	Advisory Committees Focus Groups Roundtables Public Meetings	Local Government Partnerships Community Based Organization Partnerships Transportation Coordination Committee (TCC)	Transportation and Air Quality Committee (TAQC)/ ARC Board Collective Action Co-Design
Tools	MPO Website Virtual Public Engagement Information Visualization Pay for app-based ads and PSAs*	Public Input Provide childcare and food at in-person meetings* Collect stories through video diaries and interviews*	Stakeholder Network Database Provide childcare and food at in-person meetings* Compensate committee members for experience and expertise*	Demonstration Projects Education and Capacity Building Prioritize cross-sector project teams in procurement process* Compensate CBOs for experience and expertise*	Fund micro-grants for neighborhood scale projects* * innovative tools

tactic can successfully meet ARC’s meaningful engagement definition as applicable, representative, and accountable, and 3) a visual timeline illustrating when the tactic is best used during a transportation planning process. The timeline on each page includes five stages of work that apply to a range of transportation planning processes:

1. Pre-planning, the preliminary period for building teams, establishing project management processes, and setting goals
2. Development, the time during which drafts of the policy, program, plan, or project are created
3. Approvals, the stage of the work when the final policy, program, plan, or project goes through required approval processes, including public comment
4. Implementation, the period during which the policy, program, plan, or project is brought to fruition and community impact can be measured over time

5. Evaluation, the process in which the project management team can do initial analysis on the policy, program, plan, or project’s impact as well as the effectiveness of the transportation planning process overall.

Refer to Table 2 for an at-a-glance view of recommended timing for ARC’s preferred public participation tactics.



Table 2: Recommended Project Timing for Preferred Tactics

	Tactic	Pre-Planning	Development	Approvals	Implementation	Evaluation
	<b>All Inform Tactics</b>					
	<b>Surveys &amp; Polling</b>					
	<b>Community Events</b>					
	<b>Open Houses</b>					
	<b>Public Comment Periods</b>					
	<b>Public Hearings</b>					
	<b>Agency Consultation</b>					
	<b>Advisory Committees</b>					
	<b>Focus Groups</b>					
	<b>Roundtables</b>					
	<b>Public Meetings</b>					
	<b>Local Gov Partnerships</b>					
	<b>CBO Partnerships</b>					
	<b>TCC</b>					
	<b>TAQC</b>					
	<b>Collective Action</b>					
	<b>Co-Design</b>					



# Project Website

## Brief Definition

The project website is the primary digital hub for information throughout the project development process. All digital outreach directs audiences back to the website, which is continually updated to feature the most recent information about the project development process. This site contains all relevant project information including but not limited to anticipated project timeline, team contact information, summaries of community feedback received, meeting summaries and results, links to any upcoming engagement opportunities, and an e-newsletter sign-up form.

## Make It Meaningful

### Applicable

As the primary digital hub for information, the project site should provide a wide range of information while not overwhelming users. Keep updates organized chronologically so community members will see the most recent and relevant information first.

### Representative

Use web design best practices to improve site usability and accessibility including font size, color contrast, and closed captioning for any video or audio.

### Accountable

Keeping the website updated is foundational for successful public participation throughout the project development process. Establish workflows for at least two team members to have access to the website to increase accountability and minimize delays for necessary updates.

## PROJECT TIMELINE





# Blog Post

## Brief Definition

Blog posts are brief, informative articles that can be published on and distributed through a variety of online platforms. These blog posts should be written by the agencies that are the most hands-on in managing the project development process. The primary intended audience for blog posts includes residents, local government staff, and elected officials. Posts can reach secondary audiences as they are shared, but the content should be written with easy-to-understand, non-technical language so they are useful for readers outside the transportation field. They provide a centralized source of consistent communication about the process' current status, anticipated next steps, and how interested parties can get involved.

## Make It Meaningful

### Applicable

Blog posts should provide updated information in a concise, news-article form to be as relevant to the process' current stage as possible.

### Representative

Blog posts should be originally published on a centralized and accessible platform, such as a city or county's main landing page or a project-dedicated website. Use analytics of website traffic to identify the most impactful places to publish blogs and links. Once published, distribute the link via social media and e-newsletters. Blog posts can even be printed as one-sheets to physically distribute in areas with low internet access.

### Accountable

To be most effective, publish blog posts regularly throughout the project development process. In the initial blog post, specify when updates are expected so that the audience has a timeline they can depend on and return to.

## PROJECT TIMELINE





# Social Media Campaign

## Brief Definition

A social media campaign is a combination of branded images, videos, and text posted on a strategic schedule. These campaigns are a collaborative effort of the agencies managing the project development process and the local governments where the project, program, or policy is located. The primary audience for social media campaigns includes residents, advocacy groups, community based organizations, and neighborhood associations. Secondary audiences include local government staff, elected officials, and other interested parties. Social media content is most effective when it has dynamic design and offers direct calls to action. Similar to blog posts, social media campaigns use easy-to-understand, non-technical language to engage readers outside the transportation field. They provide concise, shareable information to generate interest and connect the public with additional resources.

## Make It Meaningful

### Applicable

Keep social media content direct and easily digestible. No matter what medium the post includes, it should relate to the most current updates and include upcoming participation opportunities. Social media campaigns should always direct the audience to a specific event, engagement opportunity, or long-form resource.

### Representative

Social media content should originate from the government or project-dedicated page and then be shared by participating agencies. Use analytics from the local government’s social media page to identify the most impactful times to publish posts for that community. Share the post with other stakeholders and ask for them to share the content on their pages as well.

### Accountable

Include all relevant details for upcoming events and meetings — dates, times, venues, and any agencies and organizations involved. To be most effective, publish content throughout the duration of the project development process. Delegate a team member to monitor, log, and respond to comments as they are received.

## PROJECT TIMELINE





# Press Release

## Brief Definition

Press releases are official statements issued to press outlets to announce key project updates. The goal is to distribute official information, reach broader audiences, and invite media outlets to do additional reporting on the project or plan. The primary audience for press releases is local and regional media outlets, with a secondary audience of all interested parties including but not limited to residents, local government staff, community organizations, regulatory agencies, and elected officials. These releases can be issued at each key stage in the project development process.

## Make It Meaningful

### Applicable

Use press releases to announce the beginning of each major project phase and provide media and community members with key points of contact.

### Representative

Distribute press releases to a variety of media outlets that are relevant to the communities impacted by the project.

### Accountable

As official statements, press releases should be reviewed by all agencies involved in the project development process to confirm that the included updates and contact information is correct.

## PROJECT TIMELINE





# Community Presentations

## Brief Definition

Community presentations are brief presentations that plug into community meetings or events. For example, local interest groups or elected officials could invite the project team to present at a regularly scheduled meeting. These presentations vary in format and length, but their primary goal is to briefly present information and provide attendees with opportunities to stay engaged in the project development process. Community presentations can be tailored to a variety of audiences including but not limited to community organizations, civic advocacy committees, boards, government officials, agency directors/leadership, and resident-led interest groups. These presentations happen throughout the project to provide updates to interested parties.

## Make It Meaningful

### Applicable

While the core information should remain consistent across presentations, it is important to highlight details that are especially relevant to each specific audience.

### Representative

Collaborate with the community group hosting the presentation to accommodate their specific needs. This can include providing in-person translation services, printing presentation materials in large type, and other presentation adjustments to increase user-friendliness and best connect with attendees. Intentionally reach out to a wide range of community groups to ask if a presentation would be helpful.

### Accountable

Each community presentation should feature the most updated information available and should provide attendees with contact information for follow-up.

## PROJECT TIMELINE





# Surveys & Polling

## Brief Definition

Surveys and polling are virtual or in-person tools to gather community responses to a set list of questions. The goal is to capture the public’s responses to issues or ideas related to the transportation planning process. Polls are usually limited to yes/no questions or preferences, while surveys include a variety of question types to capture more detailed information about public opinions, behaviors, and ideas of stakeholders. Surveys are designed to gain a deeper understanding of community needs, concerns, and perspectives. Polls and surveys can be tailored to reach different audiences including but not limited to local residents, community based organizations, business owners, and advocacy groups. Surveys and polls are most useful at the beginning of the transportation planning process and at specific project milestones. They can also be used as an evaluation tool after the process is complete and are useful for gauging people’s values and priorities.

## Make It Meaningful

### Applicable

Keep all questions within the scope of the transportation planning process. Asking questions that are not connected to the current process can sow distrust with community members and contribute to survey fatigue.

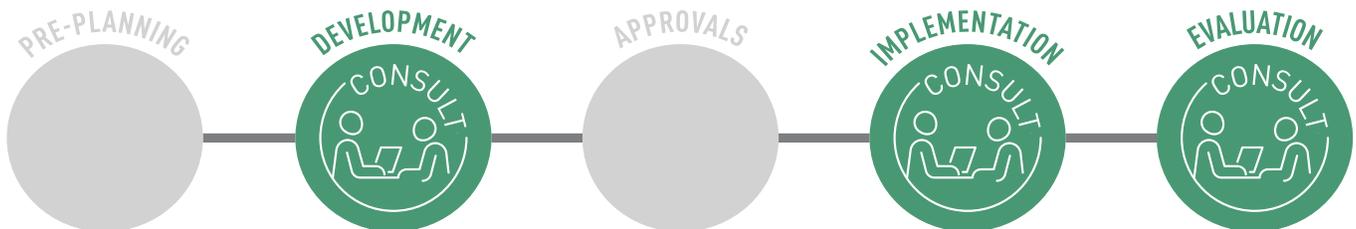
### Representative

Design surveys for digital and print formats, and have printed copies on hand at in-person events. Have at least one team member available to assist attendees with the survey so that literacy level is not a barrier. Distribute links and paper copies of surveys widely.

### Accountable

Establish clear workflows for managing poll and survey results including data collection and analysis. Keep questions consistent across all platforms. Include details about the survey and polling processes in final reports to increase transparency with stakeholders.

## PROJECT TIMELINE





# Community Events

## Brief Definition

Community events are events hosted by community based organizations (CBOs) or neighborhoods that transportation planning teams can attend and contribute to by engaging with attendees. Most often this engagement is based around a table or booth that provides information about the project and in-person engagement activities to gather feedback from community members. These events are an opportunity for community members impacted by the project development process to learn more about the project, provide feedback on decisions, and speak directly with team members. Community events are an ideal avenue for collaboration with local governments and indigenous tribal governments. They also are a great opportunity to work with CBOs, artists, culture workers, and other residents to incorporate creative engagement techniques.

## Make It Meaningful

### Applicable

Similar to community presentations, these events should provide consistent information and also highlight information that is especially relevant to each event’s specific audience.

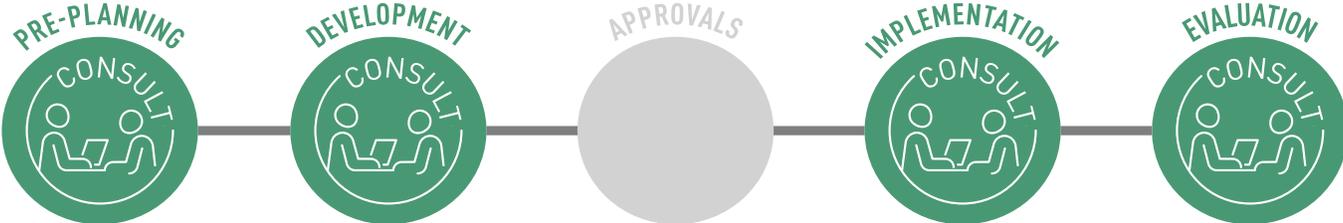
### Representative

Partner with local CBOs to identify events within a variety of communities. Develop and utilize tools to capture characteristics of participants and their comments in real-time so the team can effectively track who they are and aren’t hearing from.

### Accountable

Use activities to capture input from attendees in different ways — interactive maps, discussion cards, etc. Designate team members to take notes on key points and questions raised in conversations with attendees throughout the event.

## PROJECT TIMELINE





# Open Houses

## Brief Definition

Open houses are events hosted by the transportation planning team where community members can engage with information in a more casual, relational format and speak directly to the project team and decision makers. Open Houses are held at convenient and accessible times and locations. Similar to community events, open houses have a flexible format that supports collaboration with community based organizations, artists, culture workers, and other residents to incorporate creative engagement techniques. Open houses are designed to provide information in a way that allows attendees to drop in at their convenience and still have full access to all information and engagement opportunities presented. The audience for open houses is anyone interested in the transportation planning process, including but not limited to residents, local government staff, community organizations, regulatory agencies, and elected officials.

## Make It Meaningful

### Applicable

Open houses are designed to attract audiences with a wide range of familiarity with transportation planning processes. As such, team members should have contacts and resources on hand for questions that may be outside the project scope.

### Representative

Host open houses in locations that are familiar to the community, near a transit route, and are ADA compliant. Promote open houses across all available outreach platforms. To encourage attendance from community members who aren't active online, printed announcements should be posted in popular public areas such as local businesses, schools, community centers, and parks.

### Accountable

Use activities to capture input from attendees in different ways — interactive maps, discussion cards, etc. Designate team members to take notes on key points and questions raised in conversations with attendees throughout the event.

## PROJECT TIMELINE





# Public Comment Periods

## Brief Definition

An official public comment period is the time period in which community feedback is officially documented in the public record and included in the final report of a project or plan. During this time, digital and print comment forms are issued to collect public input on the transportation planning process and information shared at public meetings and public hearings. The project team documents and responds to all comment cards and digital communications received. The audience for public comment periods includes all members of the public, and are specifically effective for those already engaged in the transportation planning process.

## Make It Meaningful

### Applicable

Distribute official public comment cards at all events within the public comment period. Design comment cards to include the public comment period start and end dates, sufficient space for respondents' notes, the project website, and project team contact information.

### Representative

To increase participation from a broad variety of communities, team members should explain and promote public comment periods in all other outreach.

### Accountable

Confirm information about public comment periods is consistent across all outreach platforms. Follow clear workflows with team members designated to document and respond to all public comment cards received.

## PROJECT TIMELINE





# Public Hearings

## Brief Definition

Public hearings are formal, structured meetings with regulatory requirements for public notice and recording public comments presented at the event. They generally occur in the development stage of the transportation planning process, following completion of the draft plan or project document. Public hearings are often included as part of commission meeting agendas rather than hosted as separate events. The primary audience providing feedback at public hearings includes, but is not limited to, residents, local businesses, community organizations, and advocacy groups. Similar to public comment periods, public hearings tend to attract a more limited audience that is already highly engaged in the transportation planning process. The secondary audience receiving feedback includes elected officials, government staff, and the project team.

## Make It Meaningful

### Applicable

Schedule public hearings on a relevant commission agenda, such as planning, transportation, or mobility commissions, to minimize redundancy and increase the number of elected and appointed officials present for the hearing.

### Representative

To increase participation from a variety of communities, explain and promote public hearings in all other outreach. Use multiple outlets to announce public hearings including printed fliers, social media posts, project website, and e-newsletters. Have written comment cards available for attendees who may not feel comfortable or be able to speak aloud.

### Accountable

Provide a brief presentation to clarify the study area and anticipated community impacts, positive and negative. Delegate team members for professional transcription as well as informal note taking to capture feedback presented.

## PROJECT TIMELINE





# Agency Consultation

## Brief Definition

Agency consultation is clear and timely communication with agencies and officials responsible for various planning activities within the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) that may be impacted by transportation planning processes. These efforts can include inviting agency leadership and staff to serve on project management teams, providing project updates and presentations to agency leadership and staff, and/or sending document drafts for review. The goal of this consultation is to connect with federal and state level agencies from a variety of sectors such as but not limited to planned growth, economic development, tourism, natural disaster risk reduction, environmental protection, airport operations, freight logistics, federal lands, and land access. Consultation with transit operators is also vital to ensuring effective information-sharing. Effective consultation with these agencies is key to the transportation planning process because their multi-sector perspectives can help identify resources, challenges, opportunities, potential partners, and more that may be outside the transportation field and strengthen overall planning outcomes.

## Make It Meaningful

### Applicable

Identify relevant agencies by geographic area to minimize information overload and/or redundancy. This can include but is not limited to state and local offices of Department of Natural Resources, National Park Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, United States Department of Agriculture, Department of Energy, Soil and Water Conservation Commission, Department of Community Affairs, Department of Transportation, and transit authorities.

### Representative

Connect with all agencies within the given project or plan area and gauge their capacity for and interest in participation. Ask local government partners to help identify these agencies and confirm the right contacts are included in consultation efforts.

### Accountable

Document all notes received and respond to comments in a timely matter. Follow-up with agencies about how and why their comments are or aren't included in final documents and decisions. Ask participating agencies to provide feedback on the consultation process to improve future communication.

## PROJECT TIMELINE





# Advisory Committees

## Brief Definition

An advisory committee is a group of stakeholders who meet throughout plan development to share feedback on the transportation planning process. Advisory committees prioritize a broad range of participants to get overarching, multi-sector input. Appointed members represent a range of locations, interests, and communities connected to the study area and impacted by the transportation planning process. Participants can include but are not limited to community based organization representatives, transportation professionals, transportation service providers, neighborhood leaders, indigenous tribal leaders, community advocates, business owners, and other engaged parties. Participants tend to be individuals who are already known to the project team, so intentional outreach is needed to include representative community members in these committees. Representatives of users of public transportation and users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle facilities are as important as members of the driving public. This advisory committee structure may also be referred to as an advisory group or user group.

## Make It Meaningful

### Applicable

Collaborate with government staff and CBOs to create an advisory committee member list that is relevant for the transportation planning process. Prepare for each committee meeting with a clear agenda and provide presentations and/or printed materials for participants.

### Representative

Conduct intentional outreach to a variety of community members to encourage participation in advisory committees. In alignment with Federal Highway Administration guidance, provide food, childcare, and compensation for advisory committee participants whenever possible, especially when such accommodations will enable more community members and parents to attend.

### Accountable

Delegate at least one team member to keep detailed notes. Maintain and use an advisory committee directory of email addresses and phone numbers to keep all committee members informed of updates on the transportation planning process.

## PROJECT TIMELINE





# Focus Groups

## Brief Definition

Focus groups are one-time small discussions of stakeholders who offer local expertise and cultural context from a specific community impacted by the transportation planning process. These groups usually include 8-15 participants and are led by a professional facilitator. Focus groups maintain a narrow scope of participants to get in-depth input from a specific group on core project issues. Their smaller size, conversational format, and minimal time commitment makes focus groups more approachable for a broad variety of stakeholders, including those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems.

## Make It Meaningful

### Applicable

Reference public records and local expertise to identify local leaders to invite as focus group participants and to learn about existing community concerns that can inform focus group topics. Create clear discussion questions and activities that are specific to the needs of each focus group and allow for the most impactful feedback.

### Representative

Research the cultural context of the study area to identify outreach platforms and styles that will improve focus group attendance and engagement. In alignment with Federal Highway Administration guidance, provide food, childcare, and compensation for focus group participants whenever possible, especially when such accommodations will enable more community members and parents to attend.

### Accountable

Delegate at least one team member to keep detailed notes. Collect information from attendees to make sure groups are representative of the community and to allow for follow-ups as needed.

## PROJECT TIMELINE





# Roundtables

## Brief Definition

Roundtables are ongoing, moderated stakeholder gatherings that are focused on a specific aspect of a transportation project, program, or policy. They are structured to provide an opportunity for collaboration across jurisdictions and organizations while remaining highly focused on a single issue or set of issues. Roundtable participants represent a wide range of stakeholders, experiences, and perspectives, and the final roundtable membership is set by the transportation project team. To emphasize peer learning and co-equal participation, each meeting should include a skilled moderator who can present information clearly and prioritize hearing from all participants throughout the discussion.

## Make It Meaningful

### Applicable

Prepare for each roundtable with a clear agenda including set discussion questions. Provide relevant presentations and/or printed materials that participants can reference during meetings to help inform and frame the conversation.

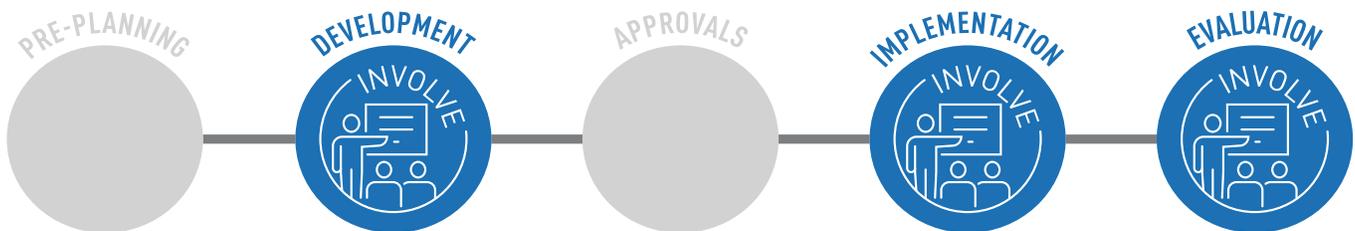
### Representative

Host roundtables in ADA-compliant community spaces, close to transit routes when available and consult with roundtable members for ideas of convenient venues for them. Roundtables can also be hosted virtually to increase the number of people who are able to attend. In alignment with federal guidance and industry best practices, provide food, childcare, and compensation for roundtable participants whenever possible, especially when such accommodations will enable more community members and parents to attend.

### Accountable

Delegate at least one team member to keep detailed notes. Collect information from attendees to make sure groups are representative of the community and to allow for follow-ups as needed.

## PROJECT TIMELINE





# Public Meetings

## Brief Definition

Public meetings are open meetings for community members to learn about and discuss the transportation planning process. These meetings include opportunities for attendees to hear presentations, discuss various topics, and collaborate on solutions that can inform the transportation plan, policy, or program at hand. Public meetings differ from open houses in that they provide structured activities or forums to gather directed feedback and generate ideas for specific goals and challenges within the transportation planning process. The intended audience for public meetings is all interested parties, including but not limited to residents, including representatives of disabled people, local government and agency staff, community organizations, regulatory agencies, and elected officials.

## Make It Meaningful

### Applicable

Use non-technical language in all public meeting activities to keep information useful and relevant for as many participants as possible, especially those unfamiliar with transportation processes.

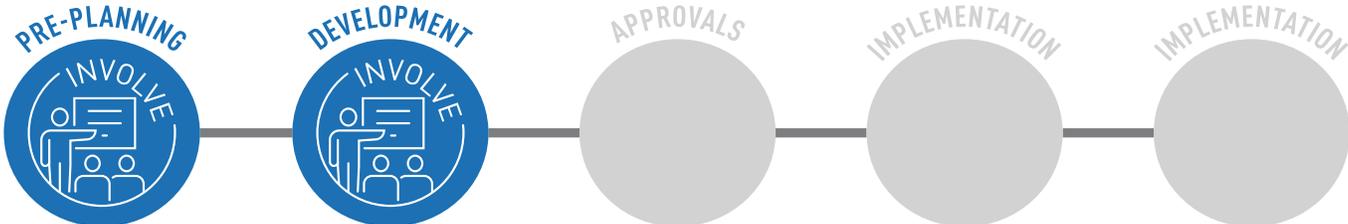
### Representative

Host public meetings in ADA-compliant community spaces, close to transit routes when available. In alignment with federal guidance and industry best practices, provide food and childcare for public meeting participants whenever possible, especially when such accommodations will enable more community members and parents to attend.

### Accountable

Delegate at least one team member to keep detailed notes. Collect information from attendees to make sure groups are representative of the community and to allow for follow-ups as needed.

## PROJECT TIMELINE





# Local Government Partnerships

## Brief Definition

Local government partnerships are ongoing relationships with elected officials, appointed representatives, government staff, and indigenous tribal governments that provide a working foundation for transportation policies, programs, and projects. Local government partnerships bring together regional and local transportation professionals to achieve shared goals. Sustained local government partnerships are key for community engagement throughout the transportation planning process because they help identify stakeholders who have high technical knowledge, and intimate understandings of local government systems. These partnerships should include working relationships with multiple departments as the transportation planning process impacts a wide range of government offices.

## Make It Meaningful

### Applicable

Coordinate with the local government transportation department to identify any boards and commissions that are engaged with transportation planning processes. Also have the transportation department staff identify which teams they work with most often and which departments they think should be involved. Ask local government partners about their main goals and concerns upfront and track how those are incorporated throughout the transportation planning process.

### Representative

Build relationships with all relevant government departments to foster cross-departmental collaboration and coordination.

### Accountable

Maintain an updated database of contacts for each local government partnership built. Maintain clean documentation of collaborative decisions made and any actions taken.

## PROJECT TIMELINE





# Community Based Organization Partnerships

## Brief Definition

Community Based Organizations (CBOs) are local organizations that operate within a specific community and/or geographic area to address local needs and improve residents' well-being. They may include nonprofit organizations that receive federal assistance to provide non-emergency transportation services. CBOs can be nonprofits but can also include organizations without official nonprofit status. Partnering with these organizations provides direct, meaningful connections with residents who hold local expertise and are deeply in touch with the community's needs, concerns, behaviors, and priorities. Similar to local government partnerships, these relationships are sustained between projects and are not task-specific. These relationships are long-term investments of time, effort, and collaboration that can strengthen community engagement and trust in the transportation planning process over time.

## Make It Meaningful

### Applicable

Geographic location is an ideal way to identify CBOs impacted by a given transportation planning process. Ask CBOs their main goals and concerns upfront and track how those are incorporated throughout the transportation planning process.

### Representative

Build relationships with a range of CBOs in relevant geographies to foster cross-sector collaboration and coordination. Make an effort to attend local CBO events and visit the CBOs' physical sites when possible to strengthen these relationships and increase opportunities to hear from community members. In alignment with federal guidance and industry best practices, provide compensation for CBOs if their participation will help achieve the goals of the public participation process.

### Accountable

Maintain an updated database of CBOs interested in being involved with the transportation planning process and incorporate updates from the partnerships whenever relevant in reports, presentations, and posts.

## PROJECT TIMELINE





# Transportation Coordination Committee (TCC)

## Brief Definition

The ARC Transportation Coordination Committee (TCC) is an advisory committee responsible for providing technical advice and recommended actions to the Transportation and Air Quality Committee (TAQC) regarding any transportation planning process happening within the MPO's boundaries or that has potential impact to the regional community. TCC is comprised of transportation and public works professionals who work closely with ARC's Transportation Planning Department. Members include representatives from all ARC counties as well as MARTA, GRTA, ATL, GDOT, and EPD. All members are knowledgeable and engaged in the transportation planning process, and as such these meetings can dive into highly technical and detailed discussions on policies, programs, plans, and projects. The committee works to maintain alignment between regional and local goals, objectives, and information.

## Make It Meaningful

### Applicable

Engage TCC membership to identify what information would be most helpful for their knowledge of and engagement with transportation planning processes. Provide relevant presentations and/or printed materials that participants can reference during meetings to help inform and frame the conversation.

### Representative

TCC membership includes at least one representative from each of ARC's counties and the City of Atlanta and a list of alternates. This membership model is important for having representation from the full ARC region at each meeting. It also includes representatives from GDOT, GRTA, ATL, MARTA, and EPD, all of whom have voting rights.

### Accountable

Maintain clear records of attendance, presentations, discussions, and votes. TCC meets monthly to stay informed of all ongoing or upcoming transportation planning processes that need review. All TCC meetings are public and held in compliance with the Georgia Open Meetings Act.

## PROJECT TIMELINE





# Transportation + Air Quality Committee (TAQC)

## Brief Definition

The Transportation and Air Quality Committee (TAQC) is the federally recognized decision-making policy committee for the ARC as Atlanta’s Metropolitan Planning Organization. TAQC members include the Chair of ARC’s board, elected chairs of the board of commissioners for each county with the Metropolitan Planning Area, mayor of the City of Atlanta, and representatives from state agencies MARTA, GRTA, GDOT, and EPD. This committee reviews, discusses, and votes on policies and plans affecting the metropolitan planning area, including the final list of projects funded in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

## Make It Meaningful

### Applicable

TAQC meetings follow Robert’s Rules and include formal votes to move the transportation planning process forward. Relevant presentations and/or printed materials are provided for participants to review and also reference during meetings to help inform their conversations.

### Representative

TAQC membership includes the chief elected representative from each of the MPO’s counties and the City of Atlanta. As such, the committee is a representative decision-making body, reflecting the full geography of the MPO.

### Accountable

Maintain all legally required records of attendance, presentations, discussions, and votes. TAQC meets throughout the year to review and vote on all relevant transportation planning items. Meeting times and dates are published on the ARC website for transparency. All TAQC meetings are public and held in compliance with the Georgia Open Meetings Act.

## PROJECT TIMELINE





# Community Co-Design

## Brief Definition

Community co-design is a project management approach that engages and empowers community members as decision-makers and thought partners throughout the transportation planning process. Since community members are co-leaders of the work, the transportation agency or MPO's role is to collaborate on ideas and also provide resources, project management, and other administration to keep the process moving. Community co-design is a wholly different approach that depends on sustained engagement from community members who may be unfamiliar with transportation planning, so it is necessary for the MPO to confirm that all applicable regulatory requirements are fulfilled along the way. The audience for community co-design includes all interested parties, including but not limited to residents, local government staff, community organizations, regulatory agencies, and elected officials.

## Make It Meaningful

### Applicable

Use community co-design when there are time and resources for flexibility and adaptability. Introduce co-design on a smaller scale as an effective approach for transportation demonstration and pilot projects and for programs and policies at the local and neighborhood scale.

### Representative

Engage existing relationships from CBO partnerships to connect with community members who represent local perspectives and needs. Prioritize building a representative team with a wide range of skills, experiences, and backgrounds. Following federal guidance and industry best practices, provide compensation for co-design participants, especially when such accommodations will enable more community members to participate.

### Accurate

Document each step of the co-design process. Schedule full-team debriefs after each stage to identify opportunities for improvement and capture qualitative and quantitative data.

## PROJECT TIMELINE





# Collective Action

## Brief Definition

Collective actions are community-led initiatives, often designed in partnership with community based organizations (CBOs) that bring attention to or meet community needs. As with community co-design, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) can provide resources, project management, and other administration to support the action’s overall goals. For example, the MPO can leverage its network to bring together transportation planners, community advocates, artists, culture bearers, designers, and architects to collaborate on transportation-focused community projects. Collective actions are scalable — from physical installations and public events to DIY publications and educational outreach — and the appropriate scale should be determined based on community priorities and capacity. This agility makes collective actions useful for quick solutions to urgent problems and long-term solutions for larger goals.

## Make It Meaningful

### Applicable

Identify themes from community engagement events as possible focus areas for a collective action. Offer collective actions as a strategy for roundtables, advisory groups, and focus groups to expand community engagement.

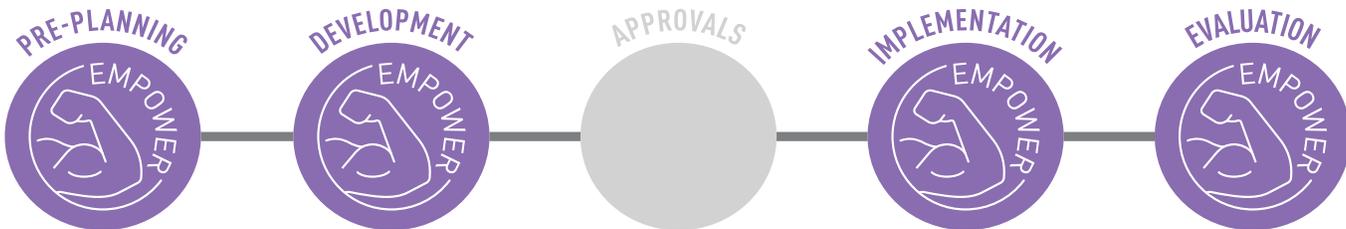
### Representative

Use the community co-design process to cultivate a representative team of collaborators. Engage existing relationships from CBO and local government partnerships to connect with community members who represent local perspectives and needs and local resources and institutions that could be involved. Following federal guidance and industry best practices, provide compensation for collective action participants, especially when such accommodations will enable more community members to participate.

### Accountable

Document each step of the collective action process. Schedule full-team debriefs after each stage to identify opportunities for improvement and capture qualitative and quantitative data. Follow-up with relevant stakeholders to gauge the action’s impact and effectiveness.

## PROJECT TIMELINE



## Goals and Objectives

To direct all engagement efforts and establish milestones within engagement initiatives, ARC’s Transportation Planning Department created a series of Public Participation Goals and Objectives that correspond to IAP2’s Public Participation Spectrum (Table 3). The goals articulate ARC’s overarching commitments to the public for each participation level of the

spectrum. The objectives supporting each goal are measurable, demonstrable milestones that allow the ARC team to clearly define outcomes and measure engagement progress throughout the transportation planning process. These goals and objectives are also matched with specific public participation tactics to illustrate how they apply to ARC’s work.

Table 3: ARC Public Participation Goals and Objectives

Participation Level	Goals	Objectives	Tactics
<b>INFORM</b>	Provide public with balanced and objective information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep public informed throughout the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of decisions.</li> <li>Utilize a variety of communication modes to increase information access.</li> <li>Publish meeting summaries and approvals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project Website</li> <li>Blog Post</li> <li>Social Media Campaign</li> <li>E-Newsletters</li> <li>Press Releases</li> <li>Community Presentations</li> </ul>
<b>CONSULT</b>	Obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listen to community concerns and aspirations.</li> <li>Communicate how public input influences decision-making.</li> <li>For MTP, TIP, and PPP, acknowledge, in writing, receipt of public comments received prior to approval of final project deliverable.</li> <li>Include public comments in the final document for Board decision and approval.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surveys &amp; Polling</li> <li>Community Events</li> <li>Open Houses</li> <li>Public Comment Periods</li> <li>Public Hearings</li> <li>Planning Agency Consultation</li> </ul>
<b>INVOLVE</b>	Communicate directly with public and provide consistent avenues for discussion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrate public’s concerns and aspirations into decision-making.</li> <li>Communicate how public input influences decision making.</li> <li>Document and publish decision-making process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advisory Committees</li> <li>Focus Groups</li> <li>Roundtables</li> <li>Public Meetings</li> </ul>
<b>COLLABORATE</b>	Partner with the public in each aspect of decision-making process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow public’s lead on formulating solutions.</li> <li>Incorporate recommendations into decisions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Government Partnerships</li> <li>Community Based Organization Partnerships</li> <li>TCC</li> </ul>
<b>EMPOWER</b>	Place final decision-making power in the hands of the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement what public decides.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TAQC/ARC Board</li> <li>Collective Action</li> <li>Co-Design</li> </ul>

## Tools for Implementation

ARC relies on various tools to implement its preferred public participation tactics and engage the public in all transportation work. The following pages provide examples of these tools, organized by the five levels of IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation.

### Tools to Inform

#### ARC Website

In addition to project-specific websites, ARC has its own website which serves as a repository for regional information on transportation policies, plans, programs, and projects. The site keeps an updated list of active transportation processes and provides details for ARC's ongoing stakeholder engagement initiatives, including advisory committees, focus groups, roundtables, and representative bodies like TCC and TAQC.

#### Virtual Public Involvement

Virtual Public Involvement refers to the use of digital tools such as virtual meetings, social media, phone applications, online publications, interactive maps and data, and online polls and surveys to engage individuals in the transportation planning process. These tools, when used intentionally as part of a broad-based engagement strategy, can increase community access to information and improve project transparency. It is important to review data on broadband access in the study areas of a transportation planning process to prevent over-dependence on virtual public involvement where use of and familiarity with such tools may be limited.

#### Information Visualization

Information visualization can include high-tech tools such as photo simulations, three-dimensional images, virtual reality, augmented reality, and aerial footage, or simpler tools such as mapping, interactive displays, signage, fliers, and project fact sheets. Each of these visualization tools can be used during in-person or virtual engagement events to make technical information easier to process and understand. Information visualizations are strong additions to project-specific websites and online publications such as e-newsletters, social media posts, and blogs.

#### App-based Ads and PSAs

Audio ads on popular music and podcast apps such as Spotify, Apple Podcasts, SiriusXM, and others allow project teams to distribute ads to specific geographic locations and touch all corners of the community. This customization makes these ads effective at reaching intended audiences for transportation planning processes, especially since these apps are often used by individuals just like radio, connecting with listeners across transportation modes including transit, active transportation, and personal vehicles.

### Tools to Consult

#### Online Engagement Platform

ARC leverages an online engagement platform to actively involve the community in shaping the region's future. This platform centralizes information on upcoming events, key initiatives, and opportunities for public engagement. Community members can participate in surveys, discussions, and interactive tools such as message boards and mapping applications within the platform. Online engagement tools can also provide reporting and Client Relationship Management (CRM) services, allowing ARC to administrate multiple aspects of its community engagement efforts from one central program, minimizing redundancies and inaccuracy in data management.

#### Childcare

As stated in federal guidance, parents and guardians of young children are often underrepresented in transportation engagement. One factor influencing the relative participation from families is the need for childcare for young children. It can be possible to use federal funding to cover childcare costs if a transportation agency documents that the costs are necessary, reasonable, and allocable. Childcare can take various forms during engagement events, and it may not need to incur additional costs. For example, the project management team may hire one or more professional caregivers to watch participants' children during the event which would require funding, or they may design events to be family-friendly with activities for children of various ages which may not require additional costs. Removing the barrier of childcare costs, either through funding support or more engaging event design, enables more parents and families to participate in transportation planning processes who otherwise would be unable to do so.



## Food

Like childcare, providing food for community engagement events is included in federal guidance and industry best practices. Such accommodations are appropriate when public meetings occur during normal meal times, the expected audience is from areas of persistent poverty, or if there may be long commutes to or from the event. It can be possible to use federal funding to cover food costs if a transportation agency documents that the costs are necessary, reasonable, and allocable. If funding sources are not amenable to covering food costs and it is clear that food would improve participation, project management teams can design and promote meetings as potlucks and bring dishes to share or they can seek partnerships with local restaurants to see if food donations are possible.

## Video Diaries and Interviews

One impactful tool for consulting with community stakeholders is to record and collect individual interviews about the transportation planning process. Interested participants can self-record a “video diary” based on a set prompt or series of questions, or the project management team can schedule times to meet with individuals or small groups and record their conversations. These recorded interviews can be technical and directed to seek detailed input on a specific issue, or they can allow for qualitative data such as oral histories and personal experiences of transportation systems and cultural contexts within the study area.

## Tools to Involve

### Stakeholder Network Database

A stakeholder network database is a comprehensive resource to connect with impactful organizations throughout the region and improve the agency’s understanding of the regional stakeholder landscape and the communities it serves. Specific strategies include email communications, invitations to engagement events, and opportunities to provide direct feedback on projects, plans, policies, and programs as they develop. The stakeholder network database bridges the gap between the public and transportation agencies by providing a means for direct, sustained communication.

### Childcare and Food

As stated previously in the Tools to Consult section, providing childcare and food at in-person community meetings can

increase attendance and participation, and this is also true for advisory committees, roundtables, and focus groups. Since these events usually have an invited list of participants, project management teams can ask what accommodations would meet the needs of the group. It can be possible to use federal funding to cover food and childcare costs if a transportation agency documents that the costs are necessary, reasonable, and allocable.

## Compensation

Offering compensation for community representatives on advisory committees, roundtables, and focus groups can increase their capacity and willingness to participate in these important conversations. As shown in federal guidance and industry best practices, representative participation may not always be achieved when community members must donate their time to provide input for the transportation planning process. Transportation agencies have found that providing financial incentives or reimbursing participants for their time and costs can increase participation, particularly from areas of persistent poverty. This compensation for participants’ time and expertise can come in the form of gift cards, transportation vouchers, and/or stipends. It can be possible to use federal funding to cover compensation for participants if a transportation agency documents that the costs are necessary, reasonable, and allocable.

## Tools to Collaborate

### Demonstration Projects

Demonstration projects allow the public to see projects in action by providing smaller scale and/or temporary installations of transportation projects. They foster a hands-on connection to the decision-making process by bringing concepts to life for residents to experience in real-time and providing opportunities for feedback and data collection in a more immediate, agile way than larger scale, permanent transportation projects usually can allow.

### Education + Capacity Building

To support collaboration work across the transportation planning field, MPOs and other agencies can partner with community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide curriculum-based education and capacity building programs. These programs introduce transportation professionals and stakeholders to strategies for collaboration and co-design, and

they also provide an opportunity for participants to experience this approach to the work. Such programs can be established by different agencies to foster interest in and familiarity with best practices for creative planning.

### Revise RFPs and Procurement Process to Accommodate CBOs

To promote collaboration as a foundation of the transportation planning process, transportation agencies can review and revise their RFPs and scopes of work for transportation work to prioritize cross-sector teams and encourage CBO participation. These changes can encourage consultants and other contractors to diversify their usual project approach to increase collaboration and innovation, and it can also make the procurement process more approachable for small businesses.

### Compensation

CBOs, especially those supporting areas of persistent poverty, are often overly cost burdened and maxing out their staff capacity. Hiring CBOs as part of the transporta-

tion planning process helps build capacity for public involvement while building stronger relationships with communities who are familiar with and trust the CBOs. One way to do this is to contract CBOs as separate consultants for a transportation project, or a transportation agency can connect them with larger contractors to be part of a cross-sector project team.

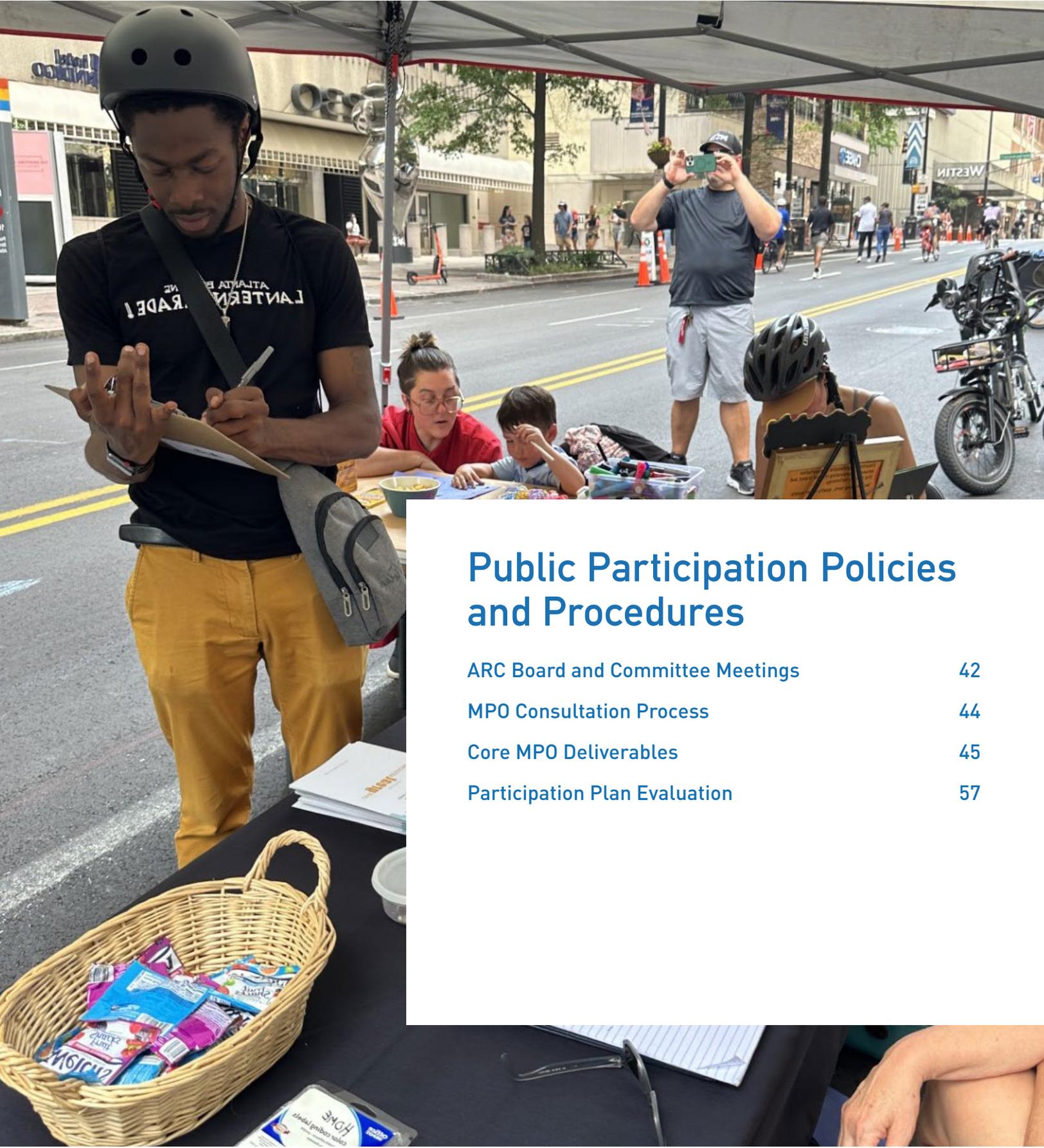
## Tools to Empower

### Micro-grants

Providing agile funding that is managed in-house to support neighborhood scale work empowers residents to lead as decision-makers throughout the process. Micro-grants are an effective tool for supporting innovative solutions to local issues, and because of their smaller funding amount and minimal regulation they allow more flexible administration and awards.







# Public Participation Policies and Procedures

ARC Board and Committee Meetings	42
MPO Consultation Process	44
Core MPO Deliverables	45
Participation Plan Evaluation	57

# Public Participation Policies and Procedures

## ARC Board and Committee Meetings

### ARC Board and Transportation Air Quality Committee

The ARC Board functions as the governing body of the Atlanta Regional Commission. The Atlanta Regional Commission encompasses an 11-county area and performs an array of functions delegated to it under various state and federal laws. One of these functions is serving as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the 19-county Atlanta metropolitan planning area.

The Transportation Air Quality Committee (TAQC) is the MPO Policy Board. TAQC encompasses the 19-county metropolitan planning area of the MPO. It is responsible for overseeing all aspects of the transportation planning process, including development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Public Participation Plan (PPP), and Unified Planning Works Program (UPWP).

Membership of TAQC includes the elected chairs of the boards of county commissions of all counties within the MPO transportation planning area. In addition, the Mayor of Atlanta, as well as the ARC Board Chair and designated board members of ARC, Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), Atlanta Transit Link Authority (ATL), Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA), and Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) are members of TAQC. Senior staff members from GDOT and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division (EPD), and others, are appointed at the discretion of the ARC Board Chair.

Specific procedures pertaining to TAQC are contained in the ARC Bylaws (Appendix D).

### TAQC Subcommittees

The TAQC Chair may elect to activate TAQC subcommittees and may appoint members from TAQC or additional members external to TAQC membership, subject to approval by the full committee.

There are two named subcommittees. They are:

**Policy Subcommittee** – Provides general guidance to staff on issues requiring more extensive discussion of information and a wide range of possible policy options, with the intention of

ensuring subsequent agenda items advanced to TAQC are focused and results-oriented.

**Regional Transit Subcommittee (RTS)** – Provides transit policy planning recommendations for TAQC. This subcommittee acts in coordination with the ATL. Any recommendations impacting entities within the ATL's jurisdiction and/or actions of the RTS that are more operational in nature will be directed to TAQC, the ATL, or to transit operating agency boards, as appropriate.

### Transportation Coordinating Committee

The TAQC has a technical support committee that is comprised of transportation staff representing the jurisdictions and agencies of the MPO planning area. The Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) provides general guidance to staff on both policy and technical issues requiring more extensive discussion. TCC also recommends actions to TAQC on matters to be approved or adopted. Subjects are placed on the TCC agenda in advance of being placed on the TAQC agenda, and recommendations flow from TCC through to TAQC on all action items.

Membership of TCC includes a designated transportation planning staff person from each of the MPO's 19 counties, as well as an alternate for each county. In addition, there is a designated staff person from GDOT Planning, GRTA, ATL, MARTA, and GAEPD. Finally, there are municipal representatives from six municipal districts that cover the MPO. Each of these members have voting status. Non-voting members include staff from FHWA, FTA, EPA, GDOT Intermodal, Cartersville-Bartow MPO, and Gainesville-Hall MPO.

### Public Notification Procedures

**Regular Meetings** – Regular committee meetings follow an established schedule with the time, place, and date posted at least one week in advance of the meeting. For ARC, this will typically mean meetings scheduled on year-at-a-glance calendars for ARC Board and committee meetings that are available at the beginning of each calendar year. The same approach is used for public notice of TCC meetings. These calendars are posted on the board portal of the ARC

website. They serve as public notice under the Georgia Open Meetings Act requirements for regularly scheduled meetings.

**Special Called Meetings** – For special called TCC and TAQC meetings that are added to the calendar, additional public notice of the time, place, and date is posted in The Fulton Neighbor newspaper at least one week before the meeting. The Fulton Neighbor is the legal organ of Fulton County, GA. Notice is also posted on the ARC website.

For public meetings, hearings, and public comment periods associated with MPO core deliverables, ARC will publish the time, place, and date of the meetings in the Fulton Neighbor. The notice will be posted in conjunction with the start of the public comment period.

### Agendas, Meeting Materials, and Summaries/Minutes

The agendas for board and committee meetings are sent out and posted on the ARC website one week prior to the regularly scheduled meeting or as soon as possible. Agendas include all matters expected to come before the Board or Committee. Agendas for special called meetings will be sent out and posted as soon as possible. Meeting materials to support the agenda items will be posted as soon as possible before the regularly scheduled meetings and will be available in the meeting materials section of the ARC website.

Meeting summaries, including a summary of the subjects acted on and members present are posted to the ARC website within two business days of the meeting. In addition, a description of each action item, the identity of the persons making and seconding motions and a record of all votes are summarized and available as soon as possible and in conjunction with the meeting minutes. Meeting minutes, either audio-recorded or transcribed, are available by the next regularly scheduled meeting.

### Public Comment Procedures

ARC invites public comment at all regularly scheduled and special called board and committee meetings.

Procedures for public comment at regularly and special called meetings are outlined below:

- Each of the board and committee meetings is open to the public and includes an opportunity for members of the public to provide input as noted on the meeting agenda.
- A public comment period is part of each meeting of the

Board and policy committees.

- To make a public comment, it is necessary to sign in during the 30 minutes prior to the start of the meetings. Prior notification of intent to speak is also encouraged and should be directed to the ARC Office of the Executive Director, preferably no less than five days before the meeting.
- Ten minutes at the beginning of the Board Meeting are designated for public comments for members of the public who signed up to speak.
- Additional time can be allocated for public comment, with a vote of the board.
- Each speaker is allotted two minutes for their comments. This time allotment and the overall time allowed for public comment can be modified by the ARC Board Chair or a majority vote of the Board or committee members present.
- If unable to speak to the Board or committee due to time restrictions, commenters are encouraged to provide their comment in writing.
- A summary of public comments made is included in committee meeting notes. At the discretion of the committee chair, a brief verbal summary of such comments will be brought to the Board's attention.

### Official Public Comment Periods and Public Hearings for MPO Core Deliverables

Sometimes regulatory requirements prescribe official public review and comment periods. This is the case for three of the MPO core deliverables. Public review and comment periods, as well as a formal public hearing, are required when updating or amending the MTP, MTP/TIP, and PPP.

For these deliverables, ARC holds official public review and comment periods to obtain input on draft plans and hosts one or more formal public hearings, often as part of a regularly scheduled or special called TAQC or TCC meeting. Public comments are accepted either in writing during the open comment period or orally at the public hearing(s). In instances when an official public review and comment period is held, TCC, TAQC, and the ARC Board, as appropriate, will be given the opportunity to discuss the comments received prior to making any decisions or voting to adopt the plan or policy that has been commented on.

In the case where a public review and comment period is



not officially required, specifically the UPWP document, ARC offers an informal public review and comment period online to encourage public participation.

## MPO Consultation Process

The goal of the MPO Consultation Process is to provide expanded involvement opportunities to participate in the planning process for specific public and private agencies and officials responsible for planning activities related to or with interest in the transportation system. The consultation process includes early involvement, direct outreach, information and data sharing, plan comparison, and evaluations that meet federal regulations.

Although there is overlap between the agency consultation and public participation processes, the two efforts are separate. The primary difference is the target audience for consultation is comprised of formal groups and organizations, while public outreach is directed towards individuals with or without affiliation.

Agencies involved in the consultation outreach are planning partners across the region in various capacities. These agencies include: Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

(EPA), Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), Georgia Department of Natural Resources Environmental Protection Division (EPD), Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA), State Road and Toll Authority (SRTA), Atlanta Transit Link Authority (ATL), and adjoining MPOs, specifically, Gainesville-Hall County and Cartersville-Bartow County.

Additional agencies are brought into the MPO consultation process as needed. These agencies include, but are not limited to, federal land agencies with locations in the Atlanta region (the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. For MTP and TIP development, these agencies—along with local governments, indigenous tribal governments, and officials responsible for state and local planned growth, economic development, and airport operations—are invited to a special meeting to learn more about the MTP and TIP and to coordinate more directly in the MPO planning process.

Consultation with these various agencies and planning partners is an opportunity to discuss needs of the larger community, compare and coordinate planning approaches, and communicate about the vision for the overall transportation system.

ARC interacts with many of these agencies on an ongoing basis

Figure 3: Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Revision Procedures

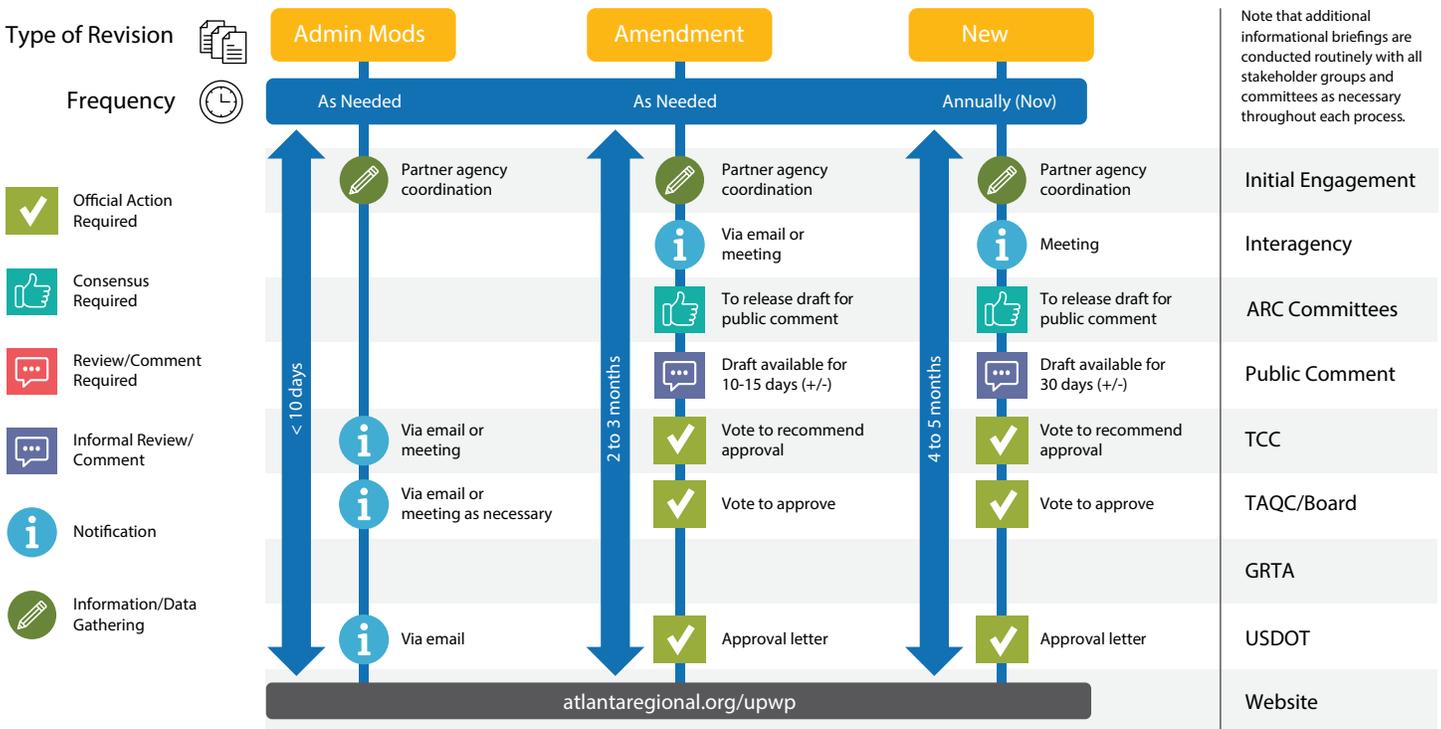


Table 4: UPWP Development Timeline

UPWP Development Activity	Months
Continuous exploration and idea generation with federal, state, local partners, and the public.	January - December
Briefing and discussion of UPWP preliminary and aspirational ideas with TCC and TAQC	April - August
Development of ARC internal budget and work program for UPWP	August - September
Development of draft UPWP and coordination with federal, state, regional, and local agencies for advance review and comment of draft document	September
Present draft UPWP to TCC, TAQC, ARC Board for first read	October
Post draft to ARC website for a minimum 10-calendar day informal public comment period	October
Present final UPWP to TCC for recommendation and to TAQC for approval	November
Final UPWP document and approval resolution forwarded to USDOT for approval with copy sent to all relevant federal, state, and regional agencies	November
USDOT approval within 30 calendar days of TAQC approval	December
Addition of USDOT approval letter to UPWP and final document posted to ARC website	December

to ensure its plans/programs are aligned. This coordination with consultation agencies continues through plan implementation. A primary mechanism for formal coordination is the Interagency Consultation Group.

### Interagency Consultation Group

The Clean Air Act requires intergovernmental coordination in areas which currently or previously did not meet federal air quality standards on various technical aspects of the MTP/TIP development process. To fulfill this requirement, ARC established an Interagency Consultation Group (IAC). ARC hosts monthly meetings of the IAC to facilitate on-going information-sharing and discussion. As part of this effort, agenda items focus on strategic guidance on the overall plan development process, including travel demand modeling methodologies, fiscal constraint assumptions, and public comment procedures.

## Core MPO Deliverables

As part of the transportation planning process, the MPO develops four core documents with different requirements

for public participation. The core deliverables include:

- Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Public Participation Plan (PPP)

Each of the core deliverables must progress through a process of continuous communication with partner agencies, ARC committees, and the interested public to ensure that transportation decision-making is done in accordance with federal regulations. This process, depending on the type of revision required, can include initial coordination with partner agencies, engagement with ARC committees, public review and comment, and action by both TAQC/ARC Board and partner agencies. These processes are outlined in diagrams that accompany narrative about each core deliverable.

### Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

The UPWP reflects a comprehensive review of ARC's overall transportation planning budget and anticipated planning activities for the upcoming calendar year. It focuses specifically



on current and near-term transportation planning activities, serving as a management tool for all participating entities, including ARC, GDOT, GRTA/SRTA/ATL, EPD, local governments, MARTA, and other local government transit providers. The UPWP includes a list of significant modal and subarea studies, funding sources and amounts, a high-level schedule, and the agency responsible for leading each initiative. Some activities identified in the UPWP may span multiple years or be general planning functions which occur continuously, while others may be confined within the 12-month time frame of that year's work program.

Figure 3 highlights the interagency, policy board, and public coordination process associated with preparation of the UPWP. It also illustrates corresponding processes that occur when an administrative modification or amendment of the UPWP is needed.

### Development of New UPWP

A new UPWP for the upcoming year is adopted annually by TAQC and the ARC Board, generally at the last regularly scheduled meeting of the year. The 12-month annual UPWP update process includes participation of ARC's Board, TAQC, TCC, federal, state, and local partners as well as the public. This schedule aligns with ARC's fiscal year, which runs concurrent with the calendar year from January to December. Table 4 shows a timeline of activity within the 12-month period and opportunities for public input.

ARC will undertake the following steps, at a minimum, to ensure agency consultation and public participation:

- ARC will continually coordinate activities for the upcoming year with federal, state, and regional agencies through formal interagency consultation and coordination activities.
- ARC will discuss key projects for the upcoming work program and other potential transportation planning activities at TCC and TAQC/ARC Board meetings.
- ARC will share a preliminary advance draft with federal, state, and regional partners, who will have five business days to review and comment prior to completion of the draft UPWP.
- ARC will present the draft UPWP at TCC, TAQC, and ARC Board meetings.
- The draft UPWP will be shared with the public online and at the ARC office. A formal public comment period is not required by federal law or regulation, but the public

will be given up to 30 calendar days to review and provide comments. Any public comment received will be documented and responded to by staff in the preparation of the final document.

- The final UPWP, along with information about any substantive comments, will be presented to TCC for recommendation and TAQC/ARC Board for final approval.
- USDOT approval will occur within 30 calendar days of receipt of final document and approval resolution.
- USDOT approval letter will be incorporated into UPWP and final document posted to ARC website.

In between these annual updates, a UPWP may be altered via an amendment or administrative modification process. The next section outlines key procedural requirements and milestones in amending, and administratively modifying the UPWP.

### UPWP Amendments

An amendment may occur at any time of the year based on a need identified by ARC or a partner agency. Typical changes which must be processed via a formal amendment include:

- Change to the overall amount of federal PL/5303 formula program funds available to ARC for transportation planning purposes during the time period covered by the UPWP.
- Addition or removal of a planning activity using federal PL/5303 formula program funds.
- Addition or removal of a planning activity using any other federal formula program funds suballocated by law to ARC.
- Budget changes to an existing planning activity funded by any federal formula program which is greater than 20% of the amount expected to be used for that planning activity during the time period covered by the UPWP.

In situations not covered by the scenarios above, ARC staff will have discretion to determine if an amendment process is necessary or if the change can be processed via an administrative modification instead.

The UPWP amendment process is described below.

- Receipt of change request; ARC staff preliminary determination that the request will require an amendment (any time)
- Coordination with relevant federal, state, regional, and/or

local partners to concur with amendment determination; this coordination may be managed through the Interagency Consultation Group or separately at the discretion of ARC staff (within 10 calendar days of receipt of change request)

- Notification of amendment nature and schedule shared with TCC, TAQC, and Board; form of notification will be at the discretion of ARC staff (within 20 calendar days of receipt of change request)
- Draft UPWP amendment posted to ARC website; notification of availability emailed to TCC, TAQC, and Board members; additional email notifications and committee/Board briefings may be provided as deemed appropriate by ARC staff (within 30 calendar days of receipt of change request)
- First read of UPWP amendment resolution at TCC and TAQC meetings (earliest opportunity)
- Informal public and agency comment period; length of period varying from 10-15 calendar days at ARC staff discretion based on the nature and magnitude of the amendment and consideration of the approval schedule
- Comments from public and agency comment period summarized and addressed; the form of the summary and manner of distribution will be at the discretion of

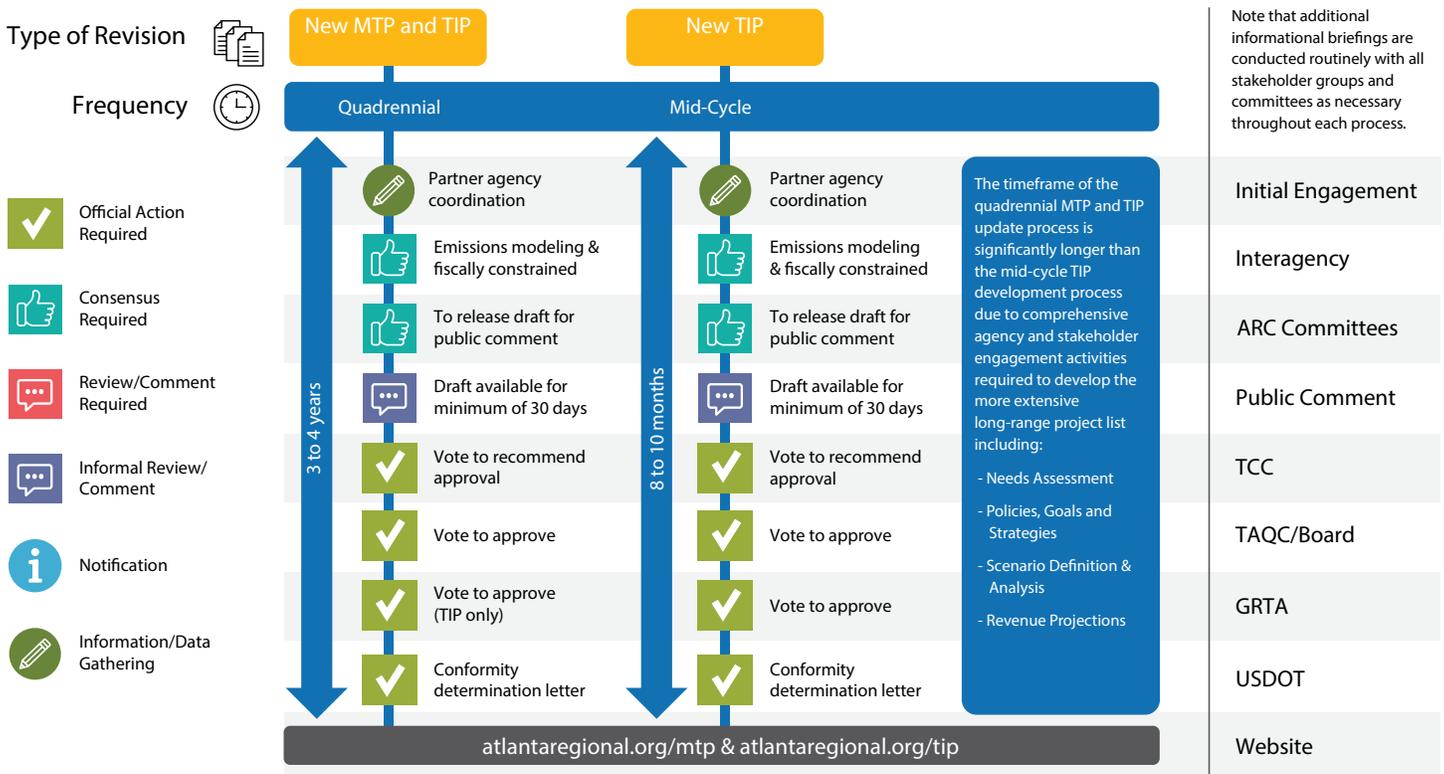
ARC staff based on the nature and magnitude of any comments received (within five calendar days of close of comment period)

- TCC recommendation of approval (earliest opportunity)
- TAQC approval (earliest opportunity)
- Board approval (earliest opportunity)
- Final amended document and approval resolution forwarded via email to FHWA for federal approval; all key federal, state, and regional agencies are copied on the email (immediately following ARC Board approval)
- USDOT approval (within 30 calendar days of receipt of final amended document and approval resolution)
- USDOT approval letter incorporated into UPWP and final amended document posted to ARC website; nature of notification of final approval to committees and Board will be at the discretion of ARC staff (within five calendar days of receipt of USDOT approval letter)

### UPWP Administrative Modifications

Changes to the UPWP which do not meet the criteria for an amendment may be undertaken via an administrative modification. They may also occur at any time of the year based

Figure 4: MTP and TIP Development Procedures



on a need identified by ARC or a partner agency. Typical changes of this nature include:

- Addition or removal of a planning activity funded by a federal non-formula competitive grant from GDOT or congressionally-directed spending.
- Additional or removal of a planning activity funded entirely by state, local, private, or other non-federal sources.
- Budget changes to an existing planning activity funded by any federal formula program which is less than or equal to 20% of the amount expected to be used for that planning activity during the time period covered by the UPWP.
- Clarifications or edits to the scope or schedule of an activity if the intent, purpose, and overall timeframe of the activity remains generally consistent with the original intent when programmed.
- Grammar edits, wordsmithing, and other minor technical corrections.
- USDOT approval letter will be incorporated into UPWP and final document posted to ARC website.

The UPWP administrative modification process is described below.

- Receipt of change request; ARC staff preliminary determination that the request may be incorporated via an administrative modification (any time)
- For changes related to the addition or deletion of a planning activity, coordination with relevant federal, state, regional, and/or local partners to concur with administrative modification determination; this coordination may be managed through the Interagency Consultation Group or separately at the discretion of ARC staff (within 10 calendar days of receipt of change request)
- Other changes not impacting any additional external agencies may be advanced without additional partner agency coordination (within 10 calendar days of receipt of change request)
- Revised document posted to ARC website; notification of availability of revised document provided to relevant federal, state, regional, and/or local partners; form of notification will be at the discretion of ARC staff (within 30 calendar days of receipt of change request)

### Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program (MTP and TIP)

The long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and short-range Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) are the centerpieces of ARC's MPO work program. They are the blueprints that details strategic investments in transportation and mobility to support metro Atlanta's future success and improve the region's quality of life.

In conjunction with the MTP, ARC administers the TIP. The TIP is the short-range program of projects contained within the MTP. It covers the first four years of the MTP, and is the mechanism for documenting federal, state, and local funding approval for all significant surface transportation projects and programs in the 19-county Atlanta region. All projects in the TIP have specific allocated funds and the project must be fully funded. When the TIP is revised, it also reflects a revision to the MTP.

Given the complexity of the MTP and TIP, it is not surprising that the consultation and coordination activities for public participation are intricate. Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the participation procedures for the development of new MTP and TIPs (Figure 4) and administrative modifications and amendments (Figure 5).

### Development of the MTP and TIP

Federal legislation requires that all MPOs develop a MTP and TIP to offer a strategic vision for the metropolitan area. The MTP encompasses no less than a twenty-year planning horizon as of the effective date and is inclusive of short-range TIP strategies and actions to develop an integrated multi-modal transportation system and facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods. The MTP and TIP are developed to address both current and future transportation demand.

A new MTP and TIP are developed every four years to confirm their validity and consistency with current and forecasted transportation and land use conditions and trends. The plans, as well as any subsequent amendments, must be approved by TAQC.

There is also a mid-cycle process to develop a new TIP that occurs at the midpoint of the MTP update cycle, or at a point when the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) resets its planning horizon years. Consultation and participation



procedures for a TIP mid-cycle update are the same as they are for the quadrennial MTP and TIP major updates except the need for comprehensive engagement is replaced with a focus on partner agency coordination, as shown in Figure 4.

Public participation is an integral part of the MTP and TIP development process and the plans must reflect the needs and desires of the communities within the region. Public input is used to develop the MTP and TIP goals and objectives, which identify and steer future transportation improvements in the metropolitan planning area.

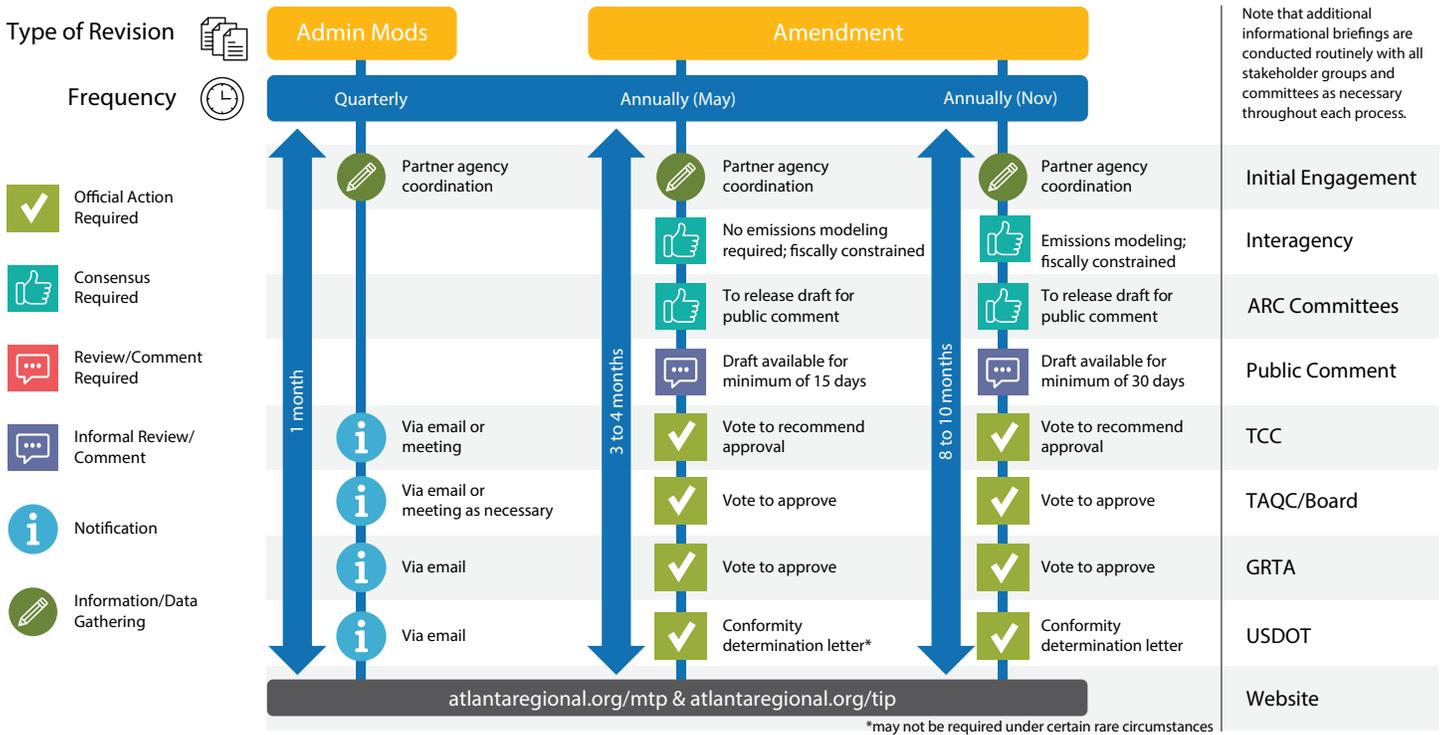
ARC will develop a Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Plan specifically for the development of each MTP and TIP. Within the first month of the start of the process, a schedule of public involvement activities will be established to complement the MTP and TIP development process. The schedule shall include the following activities/products as the minimum requirements for completion of the MTP and TIP Update. At a minimum:

- ARC will educate the public on the process from the beginning and continue the educational process throughout MTP and TIP development.
- ARC will provide public notice of public participation activities and a time for public review and comment at key decision points. Public notices will follow the public notification procedures for public meetings and events.
- Meetings may be held with citizen, technical, or ad hoc committees, TAQC, TCC, and other stakeholders. The purpose of these meetings is to brief each committee on the

progress of the MTP and TIP and to receive comments or suggestions.

- Public involvement activities will be scheduled throughout the period of plan development. The format and purpose of the activities will be based on desired meeting outcomes and the stage of plan development. These activities will also include public involvement conducted as part of county-led comprehensive transportation plans and other planning studies that identify goals, objectives, needs, and strategies for the MTP and TIP.
- ARC will provide timely information about transportation issues and processes to interested parties and individuals affected by the MTP and TIP. This outreach includes, but is not limited to, blog posts, e-newsletters, community presentations, open houses, and community events.
- ARC will consult with the public about current and anticipated transportation needs for the metropolitan planning area, which may involve use of advisory panels, surveys and polling, public comment periods, public hearings, and virtual public involvement activities. Additionally, ARC may involve the public in the plan development process, using techniques such as roundtables, focus groups, and public meetings.
- ARC will collaborate on MTP and TIP development through local government partnerships and community-based organization partnerships to review information and integrate local expertise.
- ARC will seek feedback from federal, state, and regional/local agencies as part of formal interagency consultation

Figure 5: MTP and TIP Revisions: Administrative Modification and Amendment Procedures



and coordination processes.

- The draft MTP and TIP will be available for review by state and federal partners, TAQC members, and the general public for 30 calendar days.
- During the public review and comment period, draft copies of the document will be available to the public on the ARC website and at select government offices.
- A notice that the draft document is available for public review will run in the Fulton Neighbor.
- All comments received will be documented and the comments and responses will be included in the final document. ARC staff will determine if written or oral comments are significant and, if so, will provide a summary, analysis, and report on the comments and the MPO’s proposed resolution to address the comments. If the final document differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment, there will be an additional 10-day opportunity for public comment.
- The MPO has identified areas of persistent poverty within the metropolitan planning area and will encourage public involvement from these communities. ARC will provide interpreters to overcome language barriers at public meetings and events. ARC will also translate

certain documents as needed and may publish educational materials about the process in bilingual formats, if needed.

### MPO Plans, Processes, Studies, and Reports that Inform the MTP and TIP Development

As part of the MTP development process, ARC integrates a number of state transportation plans and processes as well as plans developed by providers of public transportation, required as part of a performance-based program, including: the State Asset Management Plan for the National Highway System (NHS) and the Transit Asset Management Plan; applicable portions of the Highway System Improvement Program, including the Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP); the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan and other safety and security planning and review processes, plans, and programs; the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program performance plan, as applicable; appropriate sections of the State Freight Plan; the congestion management process; and other State transportation plans and transportation processes required as part of a performance based program.

ARC, in partnership with relevant federal, state, regional, and local agencies, also develops numerous transportation plans which address all aspects of the region’s transportation

network. Some of these are modal in nature, such as regional bicycle/pedestrian, transit, and freight plans. Others are multi-modal in nature, but focus on smaller geographies, such as county Comprehensive Transportation Plans (CTPs), Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) plans, and freight cluster area plans. Other plans address certain issues such as safety or congestion and may involve one or more modes and/or geographies of varying scales. Information from these plans, studies, and reports inform development of the MTP and TIP.

It is through modal and multi-modal plans that the ARC more directly engages representatives of specific populations or interest groups. These include, but are not limited to, public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, providers of freight services, private providers of transportation including intercity bus operators and employer-based commuter programs, users of public transportation, users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle facilities, and disabled people.

These supportive planning activities do not have federally mandated requirements or state process requirements. Although there are no federal or state requirements for public review of these plans and studies, ARC will, at a minimum, conduct the following public involvement activities for new or updated documents:

- Develop a stakeholder consultation and engagement plan to support each plan development process including review of the procedures and strategies in the PPP.
- Present a project update to TCC and TAQC/ARC Board at one or more of their scheduled meetings.
- Make draft copies of reports and studies available online and at ARC's office.
- Provide at least one public input opportunity prior to final action by TAQC/ARC Board. The TCC or TAQC meeting may constitute the public meeting for this step if advertised as part of the meeting agenda.

### Revisions to the MTP and TIP

ARC maintains a regular revision schedule for the MTP and TIP and works with its planning partners to accommodate revisions as expeditiously as possible within the limits imposed by federal guidelines and regulations. There are two types of revision activities for the MTP and TIP. They can be classified as amendments or administrative modifications. Amendments are made for significant changes that

impact air quality conformity and fiscal constraint. They are processed with a high degree of formality, given the significance of proposed changes. Depending on the classification assigned to the change request, the timing, public participation, and approval processes can vary substantially. Administrative modifications are minor routine changes that occur during the project development process. These modifications are easy to administer, and not likely to be controversial in nature. Amendments require committee and Board approval while administrative modifications do not.

Policies and procedures which ARC follows for undertaking amendments and administrative modifications to the MTP and TIP are defined in the following sections and illustrated in Figure 5. These were developed in close coordination with GDOT and FHWA to ensure consistency between ARC's planning process and the one used by GDOT in developing its Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The statewide process is [documented on the GDOT website](#). By federal law, ARC's TIP is considered to be part of the STIP in its entirety, so the process and contents for both documents are uniform.

### MTP and TIP Amendments

Amendments are undertaken for significant changes to the MTP and TIP and are routinely conducted twice a year. Amendments affect the MTP and TIP conformity determination of the plans due to a scope change that alters the travel demand modeling and air quality conformity analysis and/or impacts fiscal constraint through cost adjustments, requiring the opportunity for formal review and comment. ARC works with project sponsors on a case-by-case basis to determine the most appropriate method in which to handle change requests.

Typical amendments include:

- Adding or deleting a federally funded or regionally significant project.
- Adding federal funding to a project activity for the first time.
- Advancing a federal-funded phase from the long range MTP project into the TIP period or shifting phases (regardless of funding type) into or out of the TIP period if the travel demand model network year is impacted and/or if the change impacts fiscal constraint.
- Increasing the cost of existing project phases more than the thresholds described in the Administrative



Modification section.

- Making a major change to the magnitude of the scope of work to an existing project such as altering the original intent of the project.
- Adding a project which impacts air quality conformity analysis and requires incorporation into the regional travel demand model. Such projects which are funded via a non-formula funding process may be added administratively to help meet funding obligation deadlines but must be incorporated into the travel demand model via subsequent amendment.
- Programming of new federal non-formula funds is presented as an appendix to the TIP. Non-formula funding includes project funding applied to a specific project by either USDOT or Congress. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and sponsor awardee of non-formula funding will coordinate to determine the initial funding programming details and any future changes to these funds. Following that coordination process, the funding recipient will share grant programming details with ARC, which in turn will be included in the TIP during the next administrative modification cycle if required. In other instances, coordination directly with the local government project sponsor may be required to obtain programming details.

**Interagency Coordination** – ARC consults with the Interagency Consultation group to review all documentation associated with the amendment, including modeling assumptions, fiscal constraint analysis, and the list of proposed changes to the project list.

**Participation** – A formal public comment period is required to process amendments and participation procedures vary in response to the content of the amendment. ARC staff makes this determination based on the project change and its impact on the planning process. At all times, however, the interested public, policy makers, and agency partners may obtain the full extent of information about each project change as well as engage the project sponsor or ARC staff. Prior to release of the project list for public comment, individual members of TCC and TAQC are given the opportunity to review the documentation and ask questions/provide comments about the proposed changes.

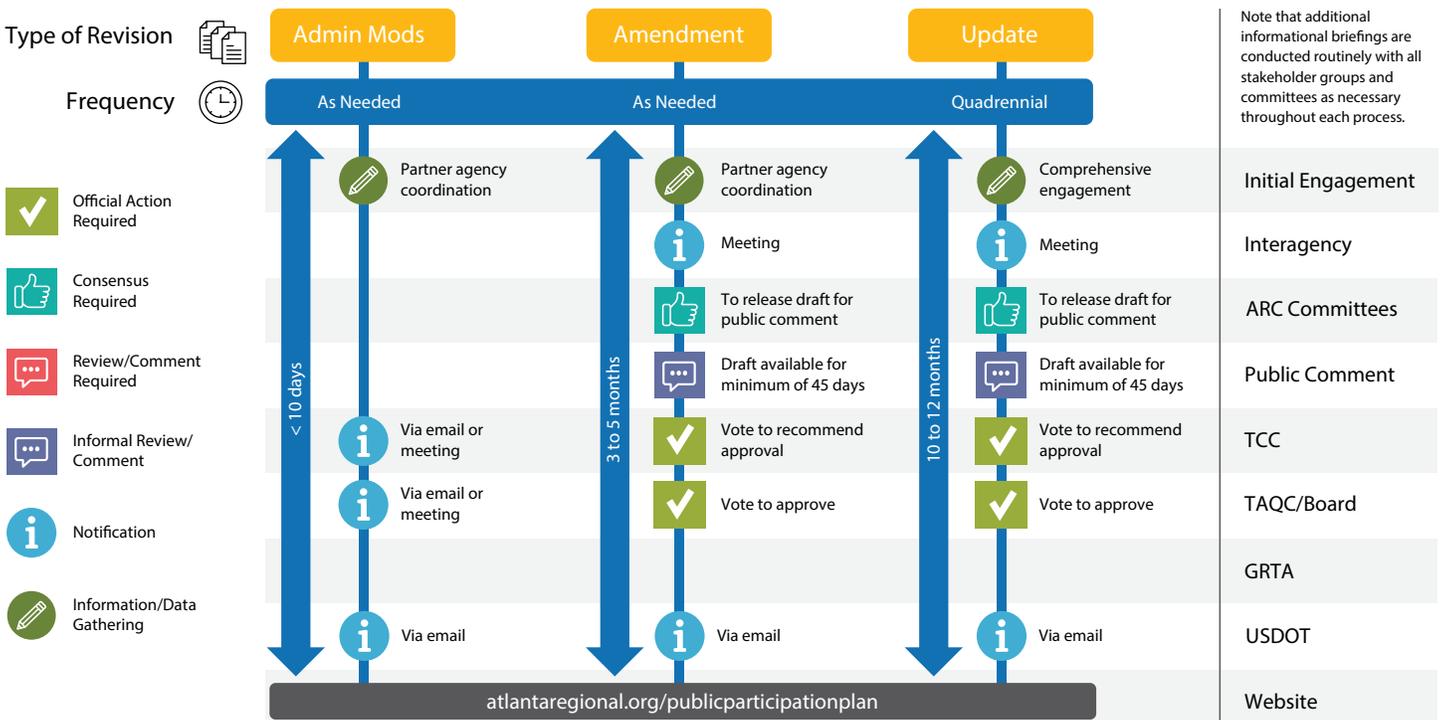
Policies and procedures include:

- Full advance disclosure of the proposed changes, via

appropriate communication channels, to all agencies and the interested public concerning affected projects. Those channels will include announcements at ARC TAQC and TCC meetings, on ARC transportation website pages, emails to ARC distribution lists, and through other media as appropriate, including ARC newsletters and social media.

- Formal notification of amendments published in the *Fulton Neighbor*.
- Disclosure of proposed changes, at a minimum: current status of project, extent of proposed change, and the nature of the proposed change.
- Public review periods for amendments range from a minimum of 15 calendar days for amendments which do not require a technical evaluation for conformity to 30 days for amendments which do. ARC will seek concurrence on the proposed length of the public comment period through the Interagency Consultation group. The length of the comment period will also consider the scheduled meetings of the Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) and the Transportation and Air Quality Committee (TAQC).
- For all amendments deemed controversial in nature, ARC will offer participation opportunities to hear from the public and agencies regarding their views on the proposed changes. Determination of what is considered controversial will be based on any known public comment activity related to the project, as well as direct communication by ARC staff with other stakeholder agencies, even if those agencies are not the official sponsor of record, or in consultation with the members of TCC.
- ARC staff may recommend further updates to the proposed amendment change list received by project sponsors and the public during the public comment period provided that such changes are minor in nature and do not pose an excessive administrative burden. These additional changes to a proposed amendment due to public comments received may not impact air quality conformity analysis or exceed the financial thresholds described in the Administrative Modification section. ARC staff reserves the right to accommodate or defer any change requests received during an amendment public comment period.
- All comments received, or additional minor change requests accommodated on amendments will be addressed with the project sponsor and other interested parties and reported to the public as well as TAQC and TCC as to content and resolution.

Figure 6: Public Participant Plan Revision Procedures



Note that additional informational briefings are conducted routinely with all stakeholder groups and committees as necessary throughout each process.

- Should any public comment result in significant difference in the final document, an additional 10-day public comment period will be initiated.
- Comments will be considered and addressed prior to ARC’s approval vote. If the comment period results in negative feedback about a project, ARC staff retain the prerogative to line item veto that project and reflect it in the document that is shared with committees prior to approval.
- There will be presentations to the TCC and TAQC in addition to informational emails prior to approval summarizing all proposed changes.

**Approvals**

- All changes proposed by the Amendment shall be presented as an action item before TCC and the TAQC, which serves as the MPO Policy Board.
- Should ARC or GRTA want to line item veto a project prior to final approval, the amendment project list will be revised and brought forward again for individual members to review the changes prior to a release of the revised amendment list for a second abbreviated (five-calendar day) public comment period.
- Upon TAQC approval, the amendments will be brought

before the GRTA Board for approval on behalf of the Governor of the State of Georgia.

- Regardless of the character of the amendment, a conformity determination will be required from USDOT in consultation with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- Upon GRTA Board approval and receipt of a conformity determination from USDOT, the TIP, as amended, will be incorporated into the Statewide TIP by GDOT.

**MTP and TIP Administrative Modifications**

Administrative modifications are processed by staff with no official action required by the ARC Board or TAQC. ARC will release a list of proposed changes within four weeks following the deadline defined for that submittal cycle. The list of the changes along with updated MTP and TIP project lists will be published on the TIP website within one week of being processed. Fact sheets will be available three weeks after processing.

Administrative modifications are reviewed and processed in accordance with these procedures, provided that:

- The modification does not affect the air quality conformity determination for the Atlanta non-attainment area.
- It does not impact financial constraint.
- It does not require public review and comment.

Administrative modifications are allowed in the following cases when increasing the cost of a project phase:

- When the federal share of the project phase amount is \$10 million or less, the cost may be increased by an amount up to \$4 million.
- When the federal share of the project phase amount is greater than \$10 million, the cost may be increased by a maximum of 40%, up to a maximum increase of \$40 million.

Typical administrative modifications include:

- Revising a project description without changing the overall project scope and intent (e.g., less than 10% total change in centerline miles of an exempt project), conflicting with the environmental document (e.g., number of lanes, distance, description/title of project), or changing the conformity finding. Revisions that request that a conformity project’s footprint be moved to a new area or corridor will be considered a major scope change and processed as an amendment.
- Splitting or combining projects if there are no changes to the original termini points and the overall scope of the phased or consolidated project(s) remains consistent and does not impact air quality conformity.
- Changing from one federal funding category to another federal funding category or from a federal fund category to a non-federal fund source.
- Establishing, maintaining, and modifying lump

sum programs.

- Delaying or advancing one or more phases of a project within the time frame of the TIP, contingent on the change having no impact on the model network year for projects in the air quality conformity analysis.
- Adding new projects from GDOT STIP lump sum programs, provided the projects do not impact the air quality conformity analysis.
- Adding new projects through the TIP solicitation process from TIP lump sum programs, provided the projects are consistent with policies and priority networks/areas associated with those programs and do not impact the air quality conformity analysis. Projects must also have had an appropriate level of review by policy committees responsible for approving the TIP.
- Programming of an additional Preliminary Engineering (PE) phase without impacting fiscal constraint where a previously authorized PE phase is older than seven years old.

Occasionally, a necessary project modification may be deemed time-sensitive and unable to be postponed until the next scheduled modification opportunity. In such cases, ARC may execute a special administrative modification to the MTP and TIP to handle a change to a specific project or projects. At the request of the project sponsor, ARC staff reviews the proposed change to determine eligibility of a special administrative modification for processing. Once the change



has been reviewed, the special administrative modification is processed. An email describing the change is sent to partner agencies and the project sponsor. An updated ARC project fact sheet or an excerpt where the project appears in the updated MTP and TIP is attached to the email. An updated project list with the processed change may be immediately posted to the ARC website upon distribution of the notification of the special administrative modification. In other cases, the change does not appear in the MTP and TIP project lists until the next administrative modification opportunity.

For modification cycles which incorporate new projects through a recent TIP funding solicitation, ARC staff shall post a list of proposed project recommendations on the ARC website and deliver a summary presentation at TCC and TAQC. Opportunities for public comment will be provided at the beginning of both meetings.

### Approvals

- There is no formal approval process for admin modifications. They are completed at the administrative/local staff level, with direct coordination between ARC, GDOT Office of Financial Management, GDOT Planning, GDOT Office of Program Delivery, and the local project sponsors.

### Public Participation Plan (PPP)

The Public Participation Plan (PPP) outlines strategies the MPO will use to engage the public and stakeholders by providing and seeking information on behalf of its transportation planning efforts. There is no federally specified time period between updates of the PPP, but it is ARC's practice to update the PPP every four years in concert with MTP/TIP updates. In addition, there is an amendment and administrative modification process for handling more limited revisions.

The PPP also requires consultation with partner agencies, policy makers, and the interested public. Figure 6 illustrates the coordination procedures associated with updates, administrative modifications, and amendments of the PPP.

### PPP Update

Development of the PPP will adhere to the following consultation and participation process:

- ARC will develop a stakeholder consultation and engagement strategy prior to undertaking the PPP Update.
- ARC will meet with TCC and TAQC at key information milestones during the PPP development process to present

## Definitions

### Consultation

One or more parties confer with the other identified parties in accordance with an established process and, prior to taking action(s), considers the views of the other parties and periodically informs them about action(s) taken.

### Coordination

The cooperative development of plans, programs, and schedules among agencies and entities with legal standing and adjustment of such plans, programs, and schedules to achieve general consistency as appropriate.

findings and obtain feedback.

- Public involvement opportunities will occur throughout the PPP update process, and gathered input will be used to inform the PPP.
- The draft PPP will be shared with GDOT and federal partners to obtain comments prior to release of the draft PPP for public review and comment.
- The draft PPP will be made available for review and comment by the public for a period of not less than 45 calendar days. Public notice will follow the public notification activities for public meetings and comment periods associated with MPO core deliverables.
- All comments received will be documented along with specific responses to significant comments. The comments and responses will be made available and included in the final document. If there are significant changes to the final draft PPP as a result of comments, ARC will determine if the changes made are significant and warrant additional opportunity for public comment.
- The PPP will be presented to the TCC for recommendation and TAQC for final adoption.
- Once adopted, the plan as amended becomes the policy document of the agency for participation in the transportation planning process.
- Copies of the PPP are posted on ARC's website and available for review in person at ARC's office.

### PPP Amendments

PPP amendments are undertaken for significant changes to public participation procedures. ARC attempts to minimize



the number and scale of amendments made outside the context of a full PPP update due to the length of time and amount of effort involved.

Typical amendments include:

- Change in financial thresholds to distinguish between processing a TIP administrative modification versus an amendment.
- Change in standard length of public comment periods for core deliverables.
- Significant change in requirements due to new federal regulation or legislation.

The PPP amendment process is as follows.

- Upon notification of a change, ARC staff makes preliminary determination that the request will require an amendment (any time).
- ARC staff coordinate with relevant federal, state, regional, and/or local partners to concur with amendment determination; this coordination may be managed through the Interagency Consultation Group or separately at the discretion of ARC staff.
- Notification of amendment nature and schedule shared with TCC, TAQC, and Board; the form of notification will be at the discretion of ARC staff.
- First read of PPP amendment resolution occurs at TCC and TAQC meetings (earliest opportunity).
- Draft PPP amendment is posted to ARC website; notification of availability emailed to TCC, TAQC, and Board members; public notice of opportunity to review and comment printed in *Fulton Neighbor* newspaper; additional email notifications and committee/Board briefings may be provided as deemed appropriate by ARC staff.
- Official 45-day public and agency comment period.
- Comments from public and agency comment period are summarized and addressed; the form of the summary and manner of distribution will be at the discretion of ARC staff.
- TCC recommendation of approval (earliest opportunity).
- TAQC approval (earliest opportunity).
- Board approval (earliest opportunity).

### PPP Administrative Modifications

Federal regulations do not provide a framework for adminis-

trative modifications of the PPP. ARC will therefore consult with its state and federal partners prior to initiating any minor revisions to determine if proposed edits that do not impact the guidelines for public notice or adoption/amendment of plans and programs can proceed outside the full amendment process.

Revisions warranting an administrative modification could include:

- Updating website addresses, phone numbers, or other contact information.
- Revised references to applicable regulations or guidance.
- Correcting misspellings, omissions, or typographical errors, and updating pictures.

Should these minor revisions proceed, ARC will prepare changes to the document, submit the material to state and federal partners and post information on the ARC website noting that the document has undergone minor revisions.



## Participation Plan Evaluation

Public engagement is only complete when it includes consistent evaluation of its own processes and impacts. This reflection is necessary for engagement efforts to improve and for agencies to have internal and external accountability.

ARC will categorize its evaluation of this Public Participation Plan into two categories of metrics, Outputs and Outcomes. Outputs (Table 5) are quantitative and immediate measures of an engagement event such as attendance and form responses. Outcomes (Table 6) are more qualitative and are measured over longer periods of time. Outcomes focus on participants'

satisfaction with engagement efforts and the impact feedback has on the transportation project, plan, or program. Tables 5 and 6 directly connect ARC's Preferred Tactics to evaluation metrics, providing a clear through line for accountability in its processes.

The ARC engagement team within the Transportation Planning Department is responsible for gathering and reviewing this data on an ongoing basis, with the potential for annual and quarterly summaries and reports.

Table 5: ARC Public Participation Outputs

Output	Tactics	Data Capture
Public Engagement Touchpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>E-Newsletters</li> <li>Social Media Campaign</li> <li>Surveys &amp; Polling</li> <li>Community Events</li> <li>Open Houses</li> <li>Public Comment Periods</li> <li>Advisory Committees</li> <li>Focus Groups</li> <li>Roundtables</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey analytics export to track number of responses</li> <li>Social media platform analytics export to track number of reactions, comments, shares, and hashtags</li> <li>Spreadsheet to track number of public comment forms received</li> <li>Sign-in sheets or direct counting to capture number of conversations and/or attendees at events and meetings</li> <li>Sign-in sheets to capture number of participants in committees, groups, and roundtables</li> </ul>
Average time for ARC to respond to public questions and comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Comment Periods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time passed between ARC receiving comment and sending a written response</li> </ul>
Public official attendance at events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Presentations</li> <li>Stakeholder Briefings</li> <li>Community Events</li> <li>Open Houses</li> <li>Public Comment Periods</li> <li>Public Hearings</li> <li>Public Meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sign-in sheets to capture number of elected and appointed officials attending events and meetings</li> </ul>
Public engagement costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All tactics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget spreadsheet to track costs of engagement efforts</li> </ul>



Table 6: ARC Public Participation Outcomes

Outcome	Tactics		Data Capture
Adequate notice for public engagement activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blog Post</li> <li>• Social Media Campaign</li> <li>• E-Newsletters</li> <li>• Press Releases</li> <li>• Advisory Committees</li> <li>• Focus Groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roundtables</li> <li>• Public Meetings</li> <li>• Local Government Partnerships</li> <li>• Community Based Organization Partnerships</li> <li>• TCC</li> </ul>	Spreadsheet of publication dates across platforms and dates of activities
Participants feel valued and heard in the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys &amp; Polling</li> <li>• Community Events</li> <li>• Open Houses</li> <li>• Public Comment Periods</li> <li>• Public Hearings</li> <li>• Agency Coordination</li> <li>• Advisory Committees</li> <li>• Focus Groups</li> <li>• Roundtables</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Meetings</li> <li>• Local Government Partnerships</li> <li>• Community Based Organization Partnerships</li> <li>• TCC</li> <li>• TAQC/ARC Board</li> <li>• Collective Action</li> <li>• Demonstration Projects</li> <li>• Co-Design</li> </ul>	Survey questions In person interviews Live polling at events Discussion questions in small groups
Clear documentation of how input is gathered and included in decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All tactics</li> </ul>		Spreadsheet tracking all input received and final decisions made
Explanation of how input impacted final decisions and documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blog Post</li> <li>• Social Media Campaign</li> <li>• E-Newsletters</li> <li>• Press Releases</li> <li>• Community Presentations</li> <li>• Stakeholder Briefings</li> </ul>		Notes on decision making discussions and procedures Workflow charts and process graphics on decision making discussions and procedures
Explanation of how feedback on the community engagement process will be integrated into future engagement efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys &amp; Polling</li> <li>• Community Events</li> <li>• Open Houses</li> <li>• Public Comment Periods</li> <li>• Public Hearings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advisory Committees</li> <li>• Focus Groups</li> <li>• Roundtables</li> <li>• Public Meetings</li> </ul>	Spreadsheet tracking all engagement-specific feedback